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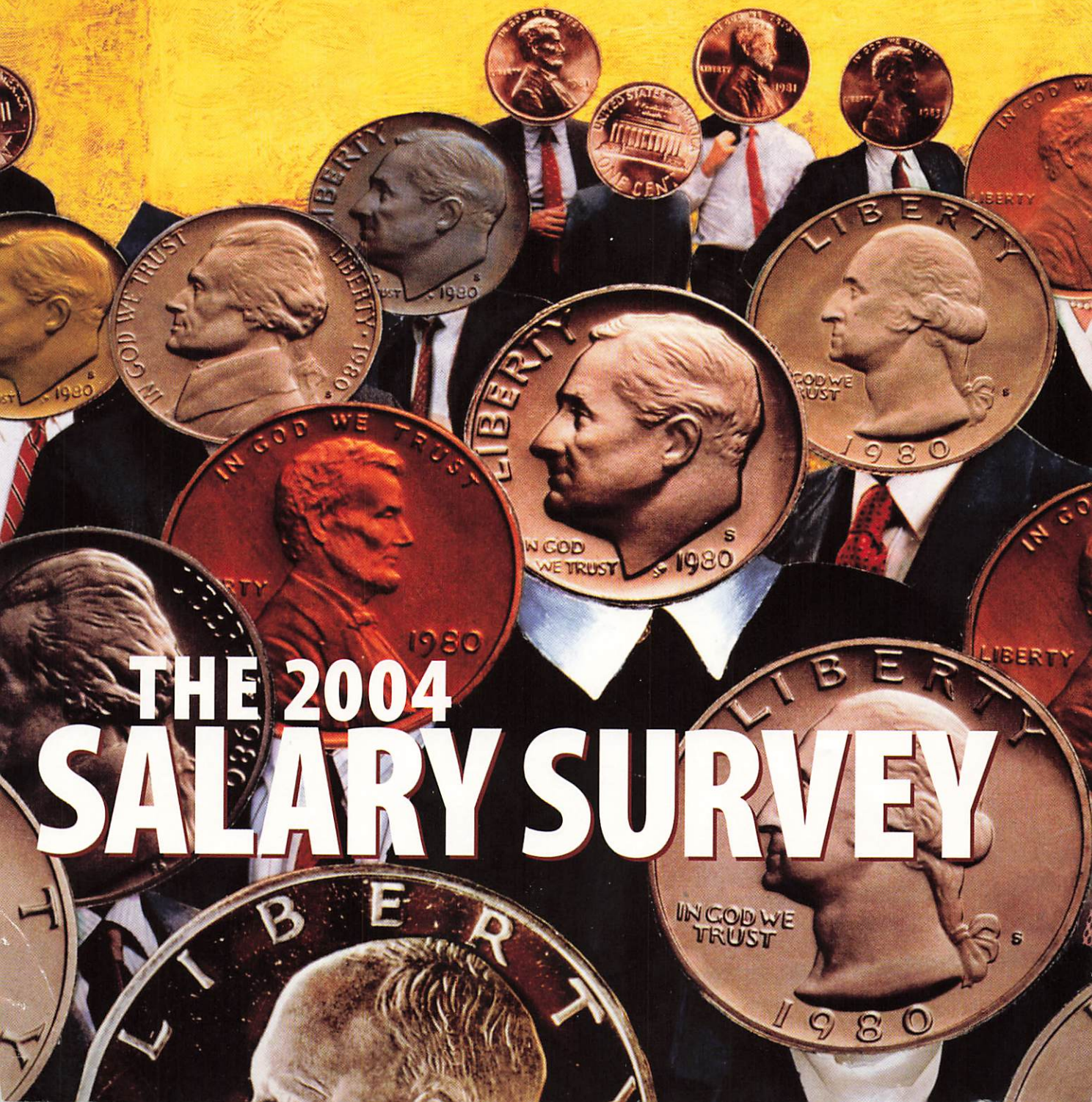

THE 2004 SALARY SURVEY

"LET ME GUESS. JUST ONE MORE THING BEFORE I GO?"

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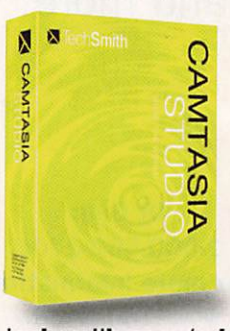

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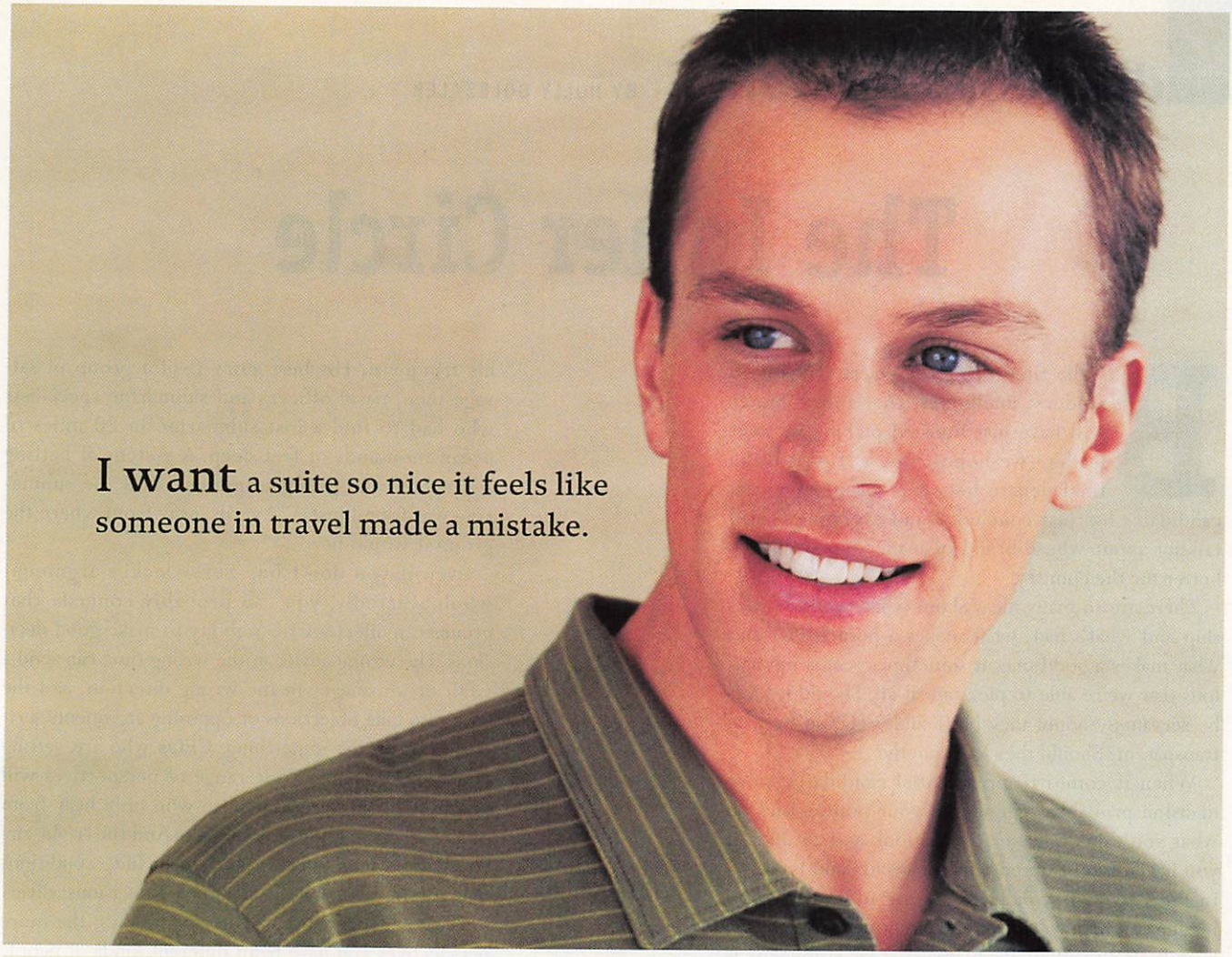

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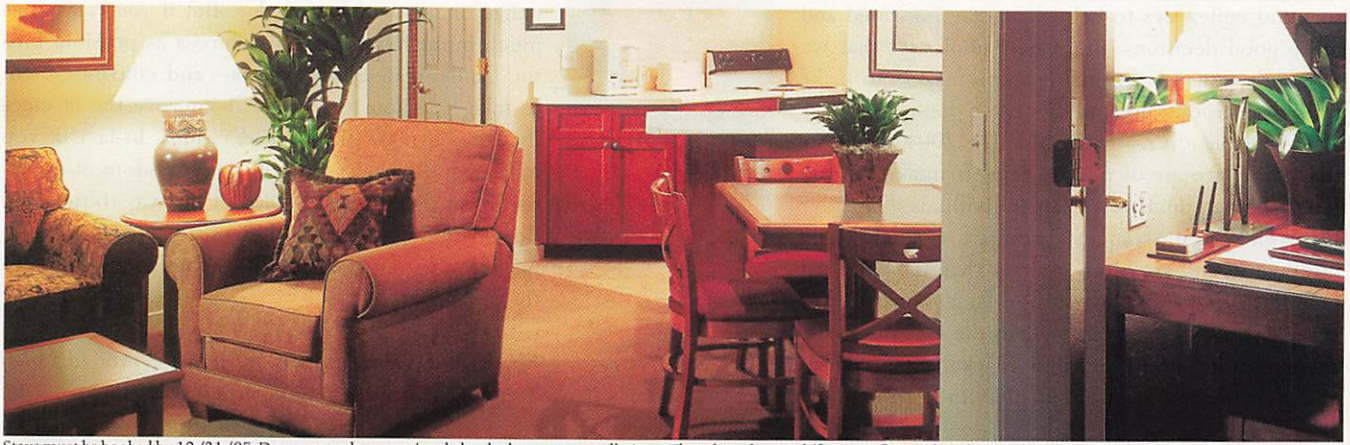

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BY HOLLY DOLEZALEK

The Inner Circle

By the time this issue starts arriving in readers' mailboxes, the United States will have just finished picking its next leader (we hope). But as I write, the final debate between the presidential candidates has just concluded and everyone is still talking about whose brand of leadership would be better for the country.

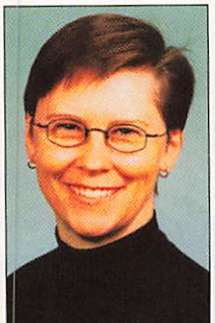
There are so many ideas about what's good leadership and what's bad, what makes a poor leader and what makes a good one, it sometimes seems miraculous that we're able to pick one at all. Should leaders be servants? Should they be flexible? Should they be transparent? Should they lead quietly?

When it comes to presidential candidates, your decision probably depends on your politics and on what you think a leader should look and act like. If you haven't kept up on current events and issues—in fact, even if you have—your idea of a good leader might have informed your decision pretty heavily. Is President Bush steadfast or stubborn? Is John Kerry too chatty, or does he just believe in a nuanced position? Your own views on leadership may have become more apparent to you as you decided who to vote for. Do you base your evaluation of a potential leader on his or her character traits, or on past actions?

The presidential race is a valuable opportunity for all of us to think about these issues, since we don't often get to choose the leaders at our own companies. But there's one component of leadership that we don't think about too often: What about who they listen to? Leaders can become isolated, and they rely on advisors and colleagues to help them stay informed and make good decisions. But a new book says that we shouldn't expect individual decision-makers to make the best decisions, because they often don't.

The Wisdom of Crowds (Doubleday, 2004) suggests that large groups of people tend to make consistently better decisions than individuals. "[U]nder the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent, and are often smarter than the smartest people in them," writes author James Surowiecki. He gives many examples, such as the Cuban missile crisis and the Iowa Electronic Market's remarkable ability to accurately predict elections, to support his argument. His best story is of a group of salvage men, naval officers and submarine specialists who had to find a lost submarine in 20 miles of ocean thousands of feet deep. A system of betting aggregated the group's opinions, and the submarine was found just 277 yards away from where the group it would be.

IT'S WORTH ASKING YOURSELF, WHEN EVALUATING A POTENTIAL LEADER, "WHO DOES THIS PERSON LISTEN TO?



HOLLY DOLEZALEK

Even if you don't buy Surowiecki's argument wholeheartedly, you can probably concede that groups can affect a CEO's ability to make good decisions. The wrong advice at the wrong time can send a CEO or a manager in the wrong direction, and the failure to take objections or opposing arguments seriously can do the same thing. CEOs who are getting good advice from a wide range of perspectives will probably do better than those who only hear from others who think the way they do. And the "right circumstances" Surowiecki refers to include conditions that common sense tells us improve decisions: diversity and independence. Generally, he says, the more perspectives you have from different kinds of people who haven't influenced each other, the better the chance that a group will come up with a better decision than any of its members would have.

So it's worth asking yourself, when evaluating a potential leader, "Who does this person listen to? What is his or her inner circle like? Does he or she ever go outside that inner circle, and if so, how is the outer circle's input received?"

If your leader seems to have a narrow outlook, this might be a situation where good knowledge management could resolve a leadership issue. We all know that the smartest organizations are the ones that capitalize on all their knowledge. But if you can get as much input from as many sources as possible into the hands of decision-makers—and convince them to take it seriously—you will improve the chances that they'll make the right decisions. In fact, if you managed to harness the collective wisdom of everyone from the executive suite all the way to the shop floor, you might make it difficult for your leaders to make the wrong decision. Talk about adding value to the organization.

HOLLY DOLEZALEK *is the associate editor of* Training *magazine. edit@trainingmag.com*

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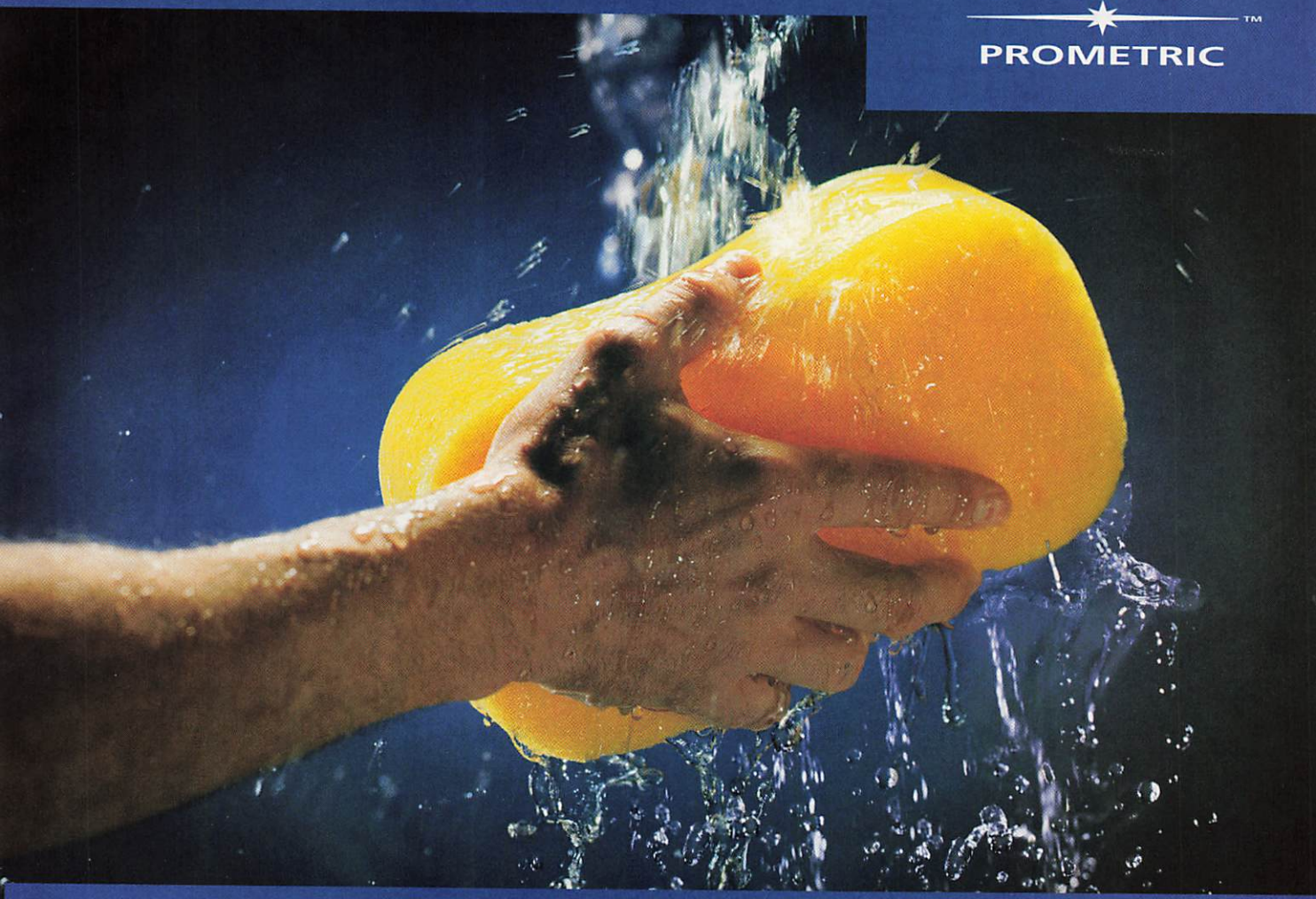

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SAYING GOODBYE

In the editorial, "When Good People Leave" (Editor's Notebook, September), you called for ideas for the survivors left behind. In my 24 years as a consultant I have observed that the informal people pipeline is much more powerful at getting out the message than the memo from the leaders of the teams. How and why a person/group/department leaves is viewed as the key to how those left behind will be treated. I was involved in the sudden closure of a home office where more than 2,000 employees were told they had until the end of the day to clean out their desks. Less than 70 people were asked if they would like to relocate across the country or look for work elsewhere—and they were only given the weekend to decide.

My suggestion is to have a well-informed and well-trained supervisor or manager spend as much time as possible with those still there. There will be job duties reassigned and numerous issues to be handled. The team will also want to know the short- and medium-term plans for those still there. Will there be a "next cut" or not? Communication and listening to employees are the keys to success. Keep the blend of people/process dialogue in balance, as the employees need a lot of both.

JACK WOLF
LIFELONG LEARNING PARTNERS, INC.
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NO MORE BELLS AND WHISTLES

I really enjoyed "Take TIME For Effective Learning" (July). I've been hearing so much from everyone that "hats and horns" is the only way to train today, whether in classroom, distance or e-learning, that your point of view was refreshing. All the spinning Flash, quasi-realistic scenarios based on decision trees, hooting and laughing often puts me off! However, as designers, we're told to keep them engaged. Keep writing. You are being read.

JOANNE DUCHASTEL
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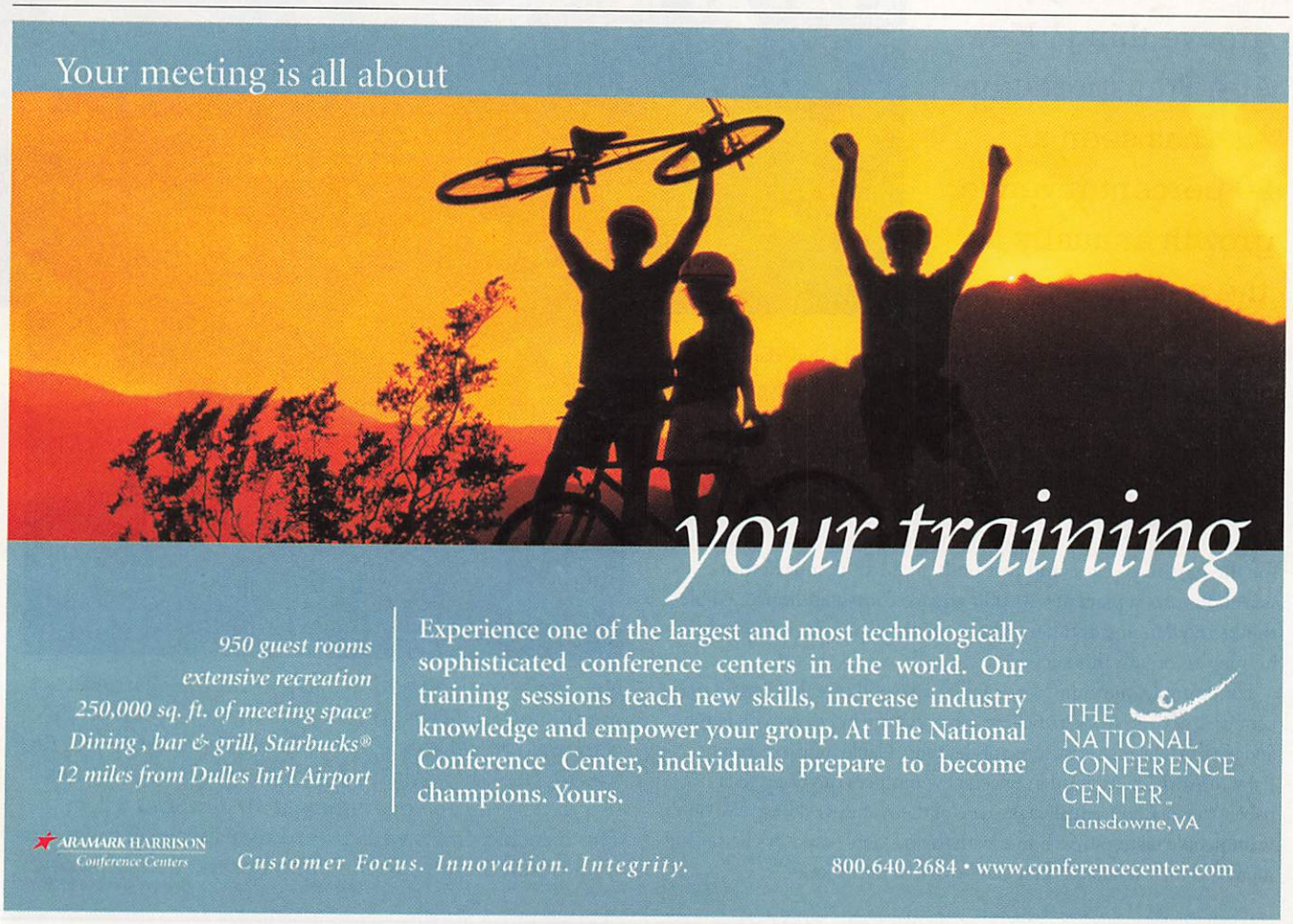
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SHAKE YOUR GROOVE THING

70% of American workers believe that people are more stressed now than they were a year ago, according to the 2004 Attitudes in the American Workplace poll by Harris Interactive, a Rochester, N.Y., market research and consulting firm.

So New Age Transportation, Distribution & Warehousing, based in Chicago, has put its employees in, taken the stress out, shaken it all about and found that that's what it's all about. The majority of the freight broker's employees participate in de-stressing dance parties every day at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

The daily dancing—which starts with a word of inspiration and is followed by a quick dance like the conga or the hokey pokey—began when employees who were dealing with the pressures of coordinating third-party freight logistics approached CEO Carolyn Gable to ask her if they could dance to relax.

Good things come from "shaking your groove thing." New Age Transportation has seen a 20 percent revenue growth annually for the past five years.

Good things come from "shaking your groove thing." New Age Transportation has seen a 20 percent revenue growth annually for the past five years, and just built an 85,000-square foot-warehouse to replace its 20,000-square foot-warehouse. Gable thinks the dancing and her other holistic approaches might be helping to create this success.

For example, the same Harris Interactive poll revealed that 63 percent of American workers believe job pressures interfere with family and personal lives at least some of the time. Gable initiated "Bring Baby to Work," a program in which new mothers can bring their babies to work and actually take care of them at their desks. "We don't want people taking stress home with them," Gable says. "It's better for them and their families if they can leave it in the office."

Other initiatives promote employees' personal life outside of the job. Gable's "Fitness Challenge" program pays employees $1 for every mile they walk or $15 for every pound they lose, and her "I Care" program rewards employees who have volunteered in the community with gift cards from Kohl's or Home Depot.

"Leading the hurrah gives the employees a sense of ownership, builds relationship skills and promotes a positive work environment for all of us," says Gable. And that's what it's all about.

New Age Transportation, Distribution & Warehousing, based in Chicago, has put its employees on the dance floor to help relieve stress. The majority of the freight broker's employees participate in de-stressing dance parties every day at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. The dancing starts with a word of inspiration followed by a quick dance like the conga or the hokey pokey.

Rising Barometer

The workplace is becoming more of a pressure cooker, and whether you want to or not, you might need to deal with your own stress—and the stress of your employees—sooner rather than later.

Only 52 percent of employees strongly agreed that they can manage the pressures of their job, according to research conducted by WFD Consulting, a Watertown, Mass.-based provider of research, consulting and implementation services. Furthermore, only 54 percent agreed that they can maintain their performance during times of change. One out of every four workers said they are "almost always" mentally and physically drained at the end of a workday, and all these percentages feed into the estimation that stress costs American businesses $300 billion annually.

WFD believes these problems are really a lack of resilience, a term they define as "the ability to bounce back from difficulties, manage pressure and adapt quickly to change while continuing to perform at a high level." For employees, a lack of resilience can increase stress-related health problems, burnout and absenteeism.

Amy Richman and Karen Noble, WFD consultants, provide steps that leadership can take to begin building and keeping resilience in an organization.

Engage and educate leaders about the business costs of low resilience. "There is a lot of national data on the stress-related costs due to lack of resilience, and your own company data can be even more convincing," says Richman. "Raise awareness that resilient employees are more likely to actively disengage or leave organizations if organizational problems and turbulence go unchecked."

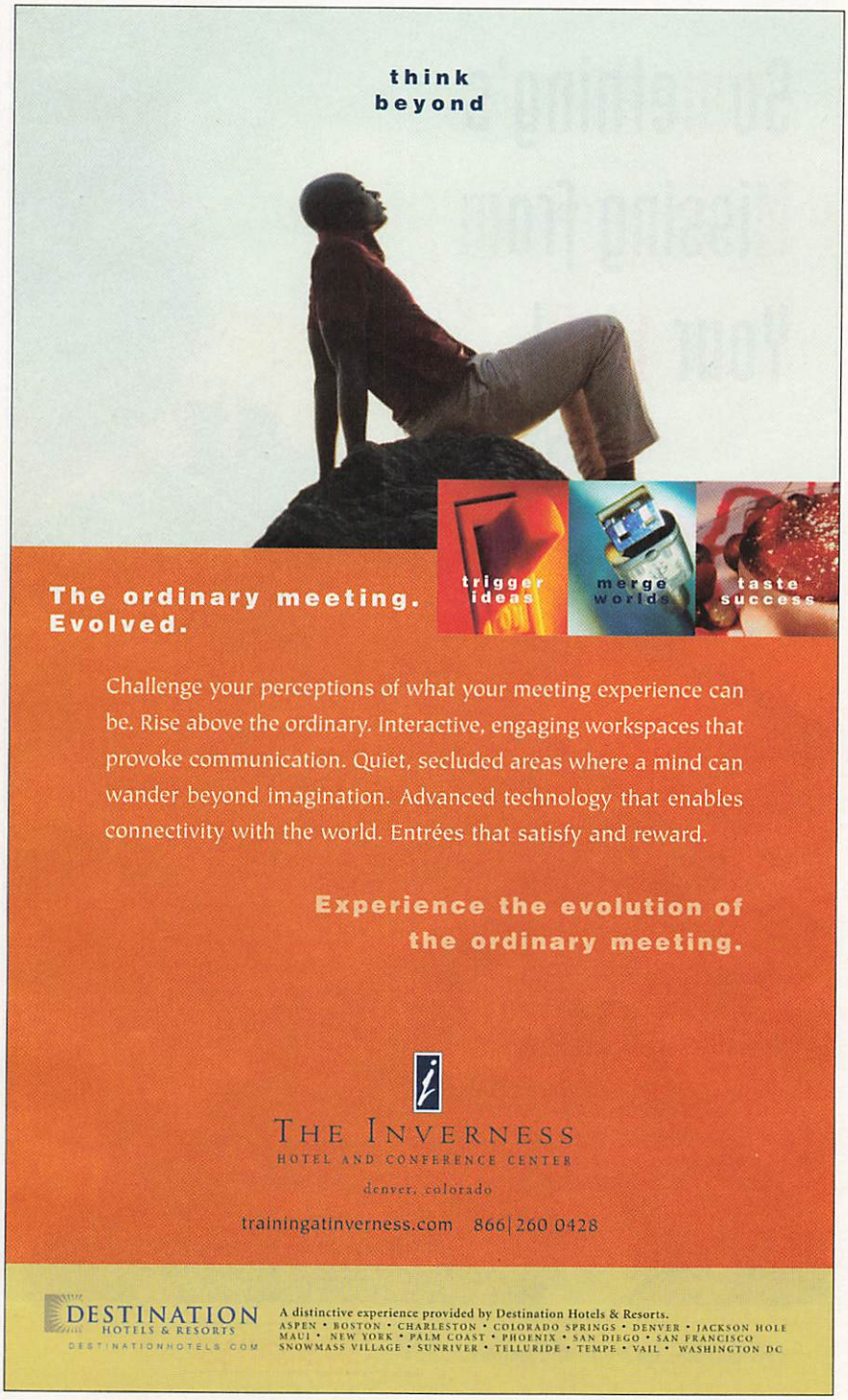
Identify threats to resilience in the organization and prioritize targets for improvement. "Encourage executives to develop personal action plans to lead efforts that will change organizational norms and practices," Richman says.

Empower managers to foster resilience. "Help managers recognize how their management styles either promote or undermine resilience," she says.

Address and manage employee workload. "Work at the team/work group level to eliminate inefficiencies and practices that lead to burnout," she says.

Equip employees with resilience skills through training. "Having the knowledge and skill sets to perform at a high level, as well as having opportunities to develop and enhance one's knowledge and skills in order to advance and/or apply in different roles and settings, build resilience," she says.

Monitor resilience regularly through periodic pulse surveys. Richman recommends tracking factors such as health, energy, flexibility, access to training and professional development, workload, culture, work-life effectiveness and social support.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Handling Multiple Languages

This month's column takes a big-picture look at the industry, examining the need for multilingual capabilities. The findings are based on the results from the "LMS 2004 Report: Comparative Analysis of Enterprise Learning Management Systems" available at www.brandon-hall.com.

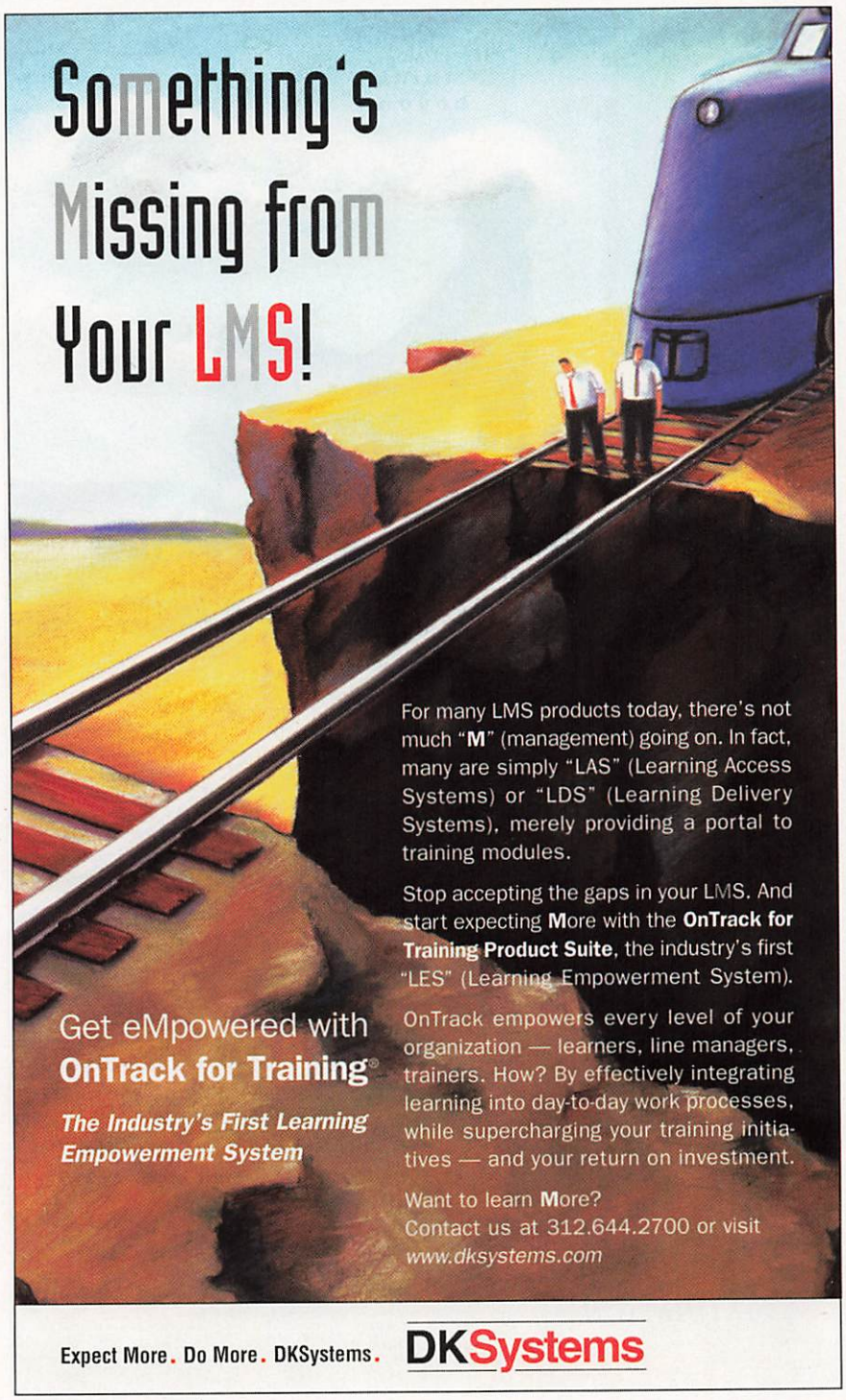
Some LMS vendors are adding multilingual capabilities, but not many. If you need multilingual or double-byte support now or in the future, your choice of vendors has narrowed. Standard language support typically means the Western alphabet—Spanish, French, German, Spanish and the like—but languages such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean create special problems for document creation and printing. The complex symbols in those written languages are too large to fit into the standard 256-character set available on a typical computer, and individual fonts in these languages must use two bytes per character instead of one.

Only half of the LMS providers we reviewed can handle multiple languages. Even some of the big players support only six or eight languages out of the box. But don't discount smaller LMS vendors on this front. A couple of smaller companies use XML translation tools and offer quick turnaround when adding more languages to the system.

Usability Must Improve

Many LMSs are feature-rich, but their usability could still be improved—especially from the learners' perspective. For example, most at-a-glance training schedules created for learners provide no indication as to whether the training event is instructor-led, on-the-job or e-learning. Schedules show a class's status—approved, waitlisted, etc.—but learners have to drill down into dialogues to get the location and time of the events.

Chances are good that you're still probably running more than one LMS. Companies often say they want to buy one solution for the whole company, but it's the exception rather than


Something's Missing from Your LMS!
For many LMS products today, there's not much "M" (management) going on. In fact, many are simply "LAS" (Learning Access Systems) or "LDS" (Learning Delivery Systems), merely providing a portal to training modules.
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the rule. Analysts often say there is a huge swing toward adoption of the enterprisewide LMS, mostly because that's what they want to happen. The fact is, it's only happening in isolated cases. The default norm is still multiple LMSs used at departmental levels, because separate departments have gotten into the habit of buying LMSs independently. This may not be in the best interests of users, but it's what's happening.

One predicted trend doesn't seem to be happening: Consolidation in the LMS sector hasn't come

Without more consolidation, customers are still buying more mediocre systems.

to pass to the extent that many expected. We think industry consolidation would be good as it would create stronger LMS products by winnowing out weaker features and weaker performers. It would incorporate all the best features into already-strong products.

Without more consolidation, customers are still buying more mediocre systems. Meanwhile, few vendors—even those with superior products—can boast profitability. A sector this fragmented is rarely viable, so we think consolidation still is inevitable.

Too much consolidation, on the other hand, would drive prices too high and limit customer options. A moderate consolidation in the LMS sector would let vendors invest more in good products to make them better, benefiting both buyers and sellers. We think the ideal would be about three dozen providers with half a dozen big players among them.

What key steps should you be taking to update your LMS? Form committees of stakeholders—administrators, learners, and representatives from HR and IT—to make sure everyone's needs are met. Then shop for and buy only the features you know you need and can implement and support.

BRANDON HALL *is the leader of brandon-hall.com, a learning research firm in Sunnyvale, Calif. edit@trainingmag.com*

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The Bold Look of Training

For most people, the name Kohler means water faucets. But thanks to a decade-long acquisition spree, the Kohler, Wis.-based company now makes everything from water fountains to furniture to cabinets. As a result, Kohler has doubled in size over the last 10 years from 10,000 to 20,000 employees worldwide.

When a company is in aggressive acquisition mode, consistent training and processes are vital to successfully integrate the newly acquired companies. No one knows that better than Mary Mickelson. As the SAP training manager for Kohler, Mickelson is in charge of SAP training for all of Kohler's acquired companies.

Kohler launched the SAP enterprise business software system for its acquired companies so that each company would be using the same business software. "That means that we have to do more training than we ever did before," Mickelson says. "Now we step into a newly acquired company and take away everything it uses to run its business and put it on the SAP system. It's a challenge because we have to help each company become a part of Kohler without hurting its pride."

Prior to using the SAP system, Kohler had a centralized training program with eight full-time trainers in safety, quality, hospitality, leadership, administration and IT, but they weren't able to keep up with the training and learning demands of the growing company. "We tried to solve the problem by bringing in vendors to train employees on the specific software, or we asked internal 'super users' within the areas responsible for their applications to do the training," explains Mickelson. "But this didn't work because everyone created their own training materials. We were duplicating our efforts."

Kohler's solution was to bring in a 13-member team from RWD Technologies, Baltimore. Using RWD Info Pak—a documentation creation tool—the team captured and recorded step-by-step transactions within Kohler's SAP system. The recordings resulted in training materials that the Kohler team could print, publish to the Web, or distribute online.

After RWD's team deployed the solution, Mickelson admits she and her team wanted to be in control of the training. "We wanted the knowledge transfer," she says. "We required RWD's expertise to get started, but we also needed to carry out our own process and repeat the training throughout the company."

> "We have created training documents in English, Spanish and French, which we put on Kohler's bilingual Web site. When our employees can find the information in their language it helps deliver consistent training. Kohler is now in the process of opening plants in China and we will bring the same consistency there."

The result? Kohler has a centralized system for the documentation and training content. Now, instead of eight trainers trying to cover the globe, Kohler has appointed 123 super users who create content for SAP training. They also serve as trainers who deliver the content on-site in different countries. As the leader of the SAP training team, Mickelson works with the super users to ensure that all of the training processes and documentation remain consistent from business to business. "When we work with an acquisition company, we first make sure they are computer savvy," she says. "If not, we bring them up to speed and teach them how to work a mouse if they don't know how."

Then the training team follows up with SAP fundamentals, and everyone must test out at 80 percent or they retake it. Mickelson's team follows up with hands-on train-the-trainer instruction. "Although we use simulation tools, we still need a live person to do the initial training," she says. "We still have instructor-led, on-site training by either the business unit experts or the people we have trained on that site."

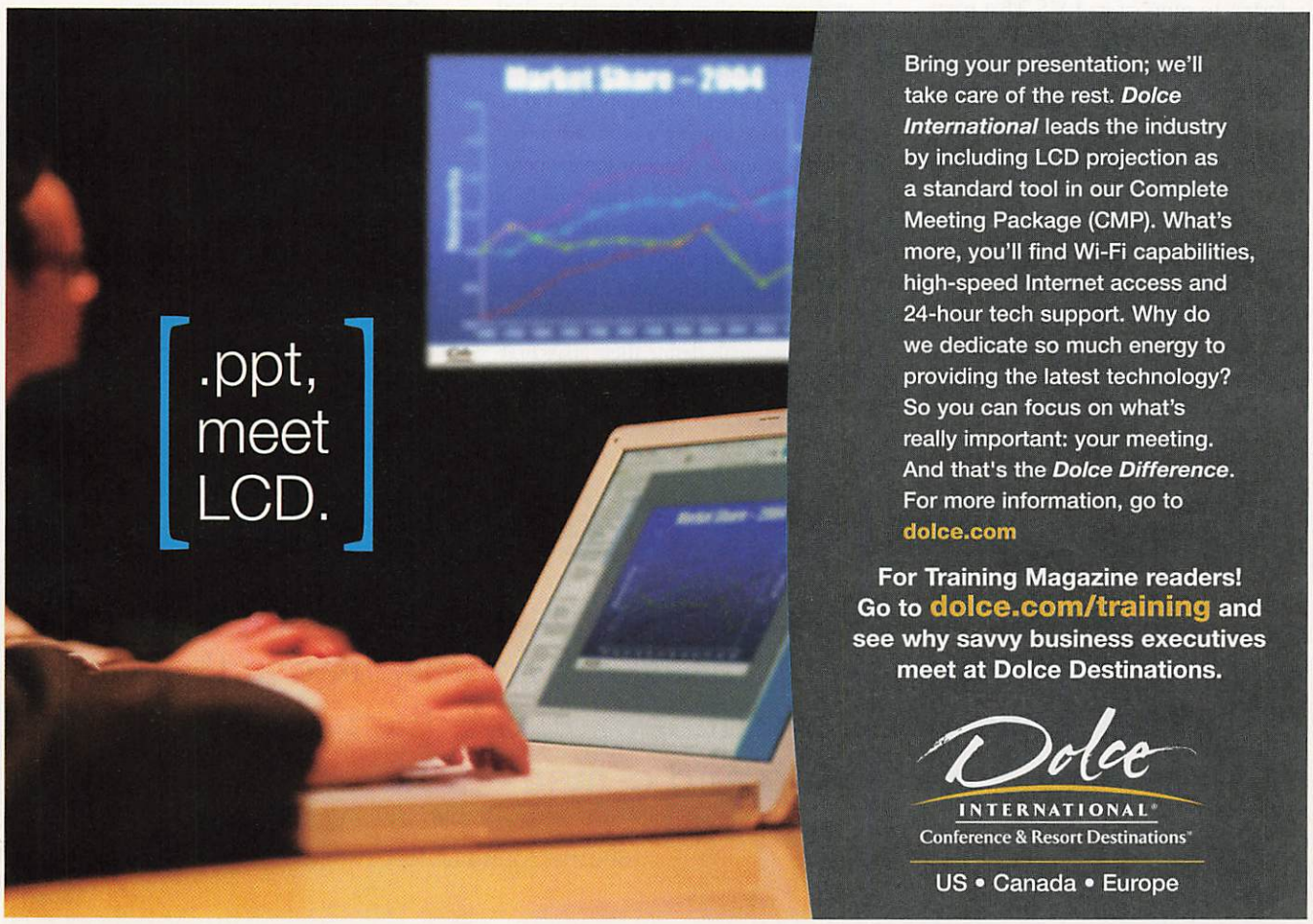
Kohler used both classroom and online training to complete the training. "The SAP training is also set up so that employees can work through it on their own. Then they are turned over to the super users," she says. For example, in sales and distribution, the company has taken all the information and created an online support system that includes training documentation. If an employee can't remember something, they visit KohlerHelp, which walks them through how a procedure is done.

Since launching the SAP training globally, Mickelson and her team have found fewer disparities in SAP procedures, and Mickelson credits that to consistent training. "When there is an acquisition, the new company now has a tested model to see how things are done," she says. "We have created training documents in English, Spanish and French, which we put on Kohler's bilingual Web site. When our employees can find the information in their language it helps deliver consistent training. Kohler is now in the process of opening plants in China and we will bring the same consistency there."

Mickelson says training managers must take the time to do their homework when it comes to training employees on complex, enterprisewide systems such as SAP. "You need to be a part of the entire team so you can understand the end result you are trying to accomplish," she says. "SAP touches every part of our business. As a training manager I need to understand that."

She also suggests deploying a change management team. "SAP is not just software; it affects the entire business," she says. "You need a change management group that can give employees that 10,000-foot perspective for what is going to happen. It can be a six-month process depending how big the business is."

Kohler is projected to grow by 10 percent over the next five years. Due to consistent training and documentation, Mickelson is satisfied that her team of super users will be able to handle the growth.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Taking Away The Pain

KLA-Tencor, based in San Jose, Calif., is a supplier of process control and yield management solutions for the semiconductor industry. After four years of use, KLA-Tencor's LMS was becoming outdated, and could not keep up with the company's increasing learning demands. Remote access was difficult, limiting the availability of e-learning within the company, and the system's functionality was strained.

"We needed technical support to maintain the LMS," says Margaret Greenleaf, KLA-Tencor's director of e-learning and technology. "And we needed a partner that understood the entire e-learning picture."

KLA-Tencor selected Trifus, a Chicago-based provider of content integration technology for the e-learning industry, to support its LMS. That partnership grew into Trifus becoming the technology integrator for KLA-Tencor. "Trifus helped us build connections to develop and deliver content, whether the content was developed internally or off-the-shelf, and integrate the content into the systems," she says.

Systems integrators are becoming a vital part of making an LMS work. "Launching an LMS is never as simple as the vendors promise," Greenleaf laments. "Anytime you try to connect something to the LMS there are technical issues. A systems integrator takes that pain away so I can focus on rolling out the training instead of trying to resolve user issues."

When it comes to setting up content, Greenleaf says a systems integrator is vital. "As a customer, I am not going to buy content from just one provider," she says. "I want to use content from different providers, both large and small, I want to create content internally, and I want to host internally and externally. I don't think the LMS providers focus on making that easy for the customer and that's where integrators help."

Greenleaf wants the learning process to be seamless to employees. "I want them to be able to log in, click, start and go," she says. "I have a small window of opportunity to engage the learner. If an employee has one, maybe two, bad experiences, they won't want to deal with e-learning anymore."

When it comes to selecting a systems integrator, Greenleaf admits she was lucky because the company was already using Trifus as a support vendor for the company's LMS—and Trifus happened to be a provider of content integration technology. But for companies that are not so lucky to have an integrator already in house, Greenleaf recommends that training professionals define their goals first. "Determine what you hope to get from an integrator and what systems you want it to support," she says. "My goal is to focus on the business and not the technical details that are unique for each learning provider."

Although KLA-Tencor was already using Trifus to support its LMS, Greenleaf says she would have selected Trifus as its integrator partner anyway. "Trifus is really agnostic when it comes to the LMS vendors they support," she says. "Their core competency is just making things work for people. I don't know that there are a lot of vendors out there doing that."

She also says that Trifus has hit a sore spot that LMS vendors are not willing to admit. "LMS vendors are not going to say, 'Yeah, it's pretty tough to get our stuff to work.' Nobody wants to admit that. It's not a great sales pitch. But from a customer perspective, it would be so refreshing if LMS vendors would say that this is going to be a challenge."

As the point person between KLA-Tencor and Trifus, Greenleaf has set up a system that tracks things that could go wrong with KLA-Tencor's online learning center and generates a report that details the problems and what they need from Trifus.

"Trifus even has our technical environment replicated at their headquarters," she says. "Trifus already has our integration scripts and modules so if we have a problem they can replicate it and fix it right away."

>> NOTED: instant messaging

Fewer than 20 percent of *Fortune* 500 companies are using instant messaging today. Those that do find it has a positive impact on productivity by reducing phone-tag and e-mail exchanges.

Source: Nucleus Research, Inc., Wellesley, Mass.

The Winning Team

The turbo team at The Vanguard Group, a Valley Forge, Pa.-based investment management company that ranked # 46 in the 2004 Training Top 100, has won the game. Vanguard's IRA conversion rate—the amount of business gained from customer phone calls—is way up, and it's all thanks to the turbo team project, a unique endeavor for Vanguard.

"In the past, our training has been broader and had more audience appeal, so that more people could go through it," explains Tammy Virnig, Vanguard University (VU) principal. "This program focuses on one area of business. It's customized and specific to one group." That group is Vanguard's advisers, who provide personalized retirement advice to clients.

#46

The Vanguard Group
2004 Training Top 100

Vanguard wanted to increase its IRA assets by equipping its advisers with better client relationship management skills in order to provide "true concierge" service. So in six weeks, VU developed an eight-week classroom-based program, working closely with the retirement resource center.

Then a skills analysis was conducted for each adviser on the turbo team. Some advisers had little retirement knowledge, while others had a lot; some only had institutional retirement plan knowledge, whereas others were only familiar with personal plans. The skills analysis allowed advisers to participate only in those parts of the program that they needed. The program walks them through the entire process, from opening up an account and the necessary paperwork, to retirement rules and regulations and providing advice on investments.

Advisers who were already knowledgeable but simply wanted to sharpen their skills helped the instructors deliver the information. "This was also exciting for us because we were leveraging all the components, involving everyone in the process from the business people in the retirement resource center in designing on the front end to the trainers delivering," explains Virnig.

The turbo team program is now administered at Vanguard's three sites in Pennsylvania, Arizona and North Carolina. Post-training assessments are averaging a score of 90 percent, indicating that learners are understanding and grasping the material. Learner feedback has been complimentary as well, but the real proof is in the conversion rate numbers. The rate is now between 65 and 70 percent, up from 50 percent.

There have been other benefits, the largest of which may be the partnering of VU and the retirement resource center. "It really cemented the business relationship with VU," says Virnig. "We also got more business. We received three more similar requests from different business groups because they saw that we could design, analyze the skill sets and deliver, and do it all quickly."

WANTED: Management Skills

About 30 percent of managers and executives severely lack the necessary management skills, according to a recent survey of 133 companies by Right Management Consultants, a career transition and organizational consulting company based in Philadelphia.

While 40 percent are considered good leaders, 30 percent are "management-challenged," and the other 30 percent are in the middle. Companies need to not only guide the bottom 30 percent upward, but to watch out for the middle third of mangers, who may break either way.

Among the findings of the survey are:

- The most-desired management skill is good communication, followed by a sense of vision, honesty, decisiveness, and ability to build good relationships with employees.
- 46 percent of survey respondents say they are not yet ready to do their boss's job now, compared with 42 percent who say they are.
- 72 percent say they will be ready to do their boss's job within five years.
- More men say they are ready to do their boss's job now than women—56 percent men to only 32 percent women.
- Women say a higher percentage of managers and executives are "management-challenged" than do men. Women say 33 percent of managers lack necessary skills; men say only 25 percent do.

BY HOLLY DOLEZALEK

Statistics often raise more questions than answers. But your intrepid editors at *Training* magazine have waded into this year's salary survey to find some truth among the statistics about what training professionals are earning these days.

Our last salary survey was in 2002. At that time, the average salary of training professionals was $67,640. Since then, not surprisingly, that average has risen; this year, the average salary among 813 respondents (randomly chosen *Training* subscribers who filled out our survey) was $73,913. Across every job title except the executive levels, every industry except communications, and every level of education and job experience, training salaries have gone up, in some cases significantly. They've gone up in each organization size category, too, with the exception of organizations with 25,000 to 49,999 employees, where the average slipped a little.

This accords with what WorldAtWork found in its annual Salary Budget Survey, which includes data representing more than 12.7 million U.S. employees. Released in August, the data indicated that 87 percent of employees would receive an increase in

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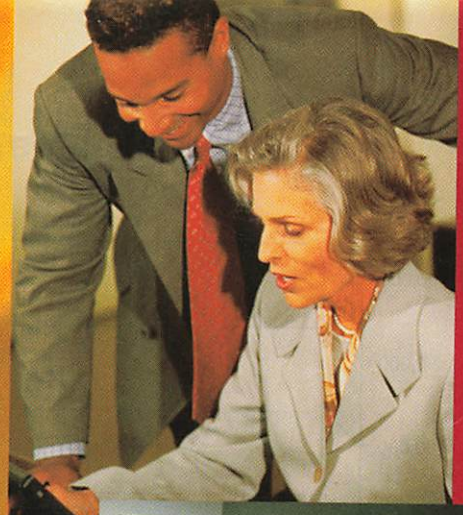

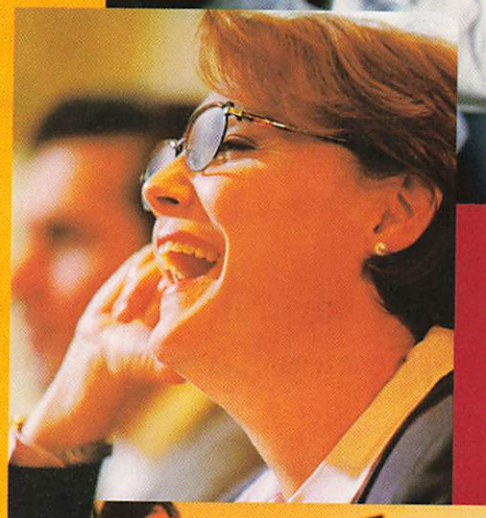

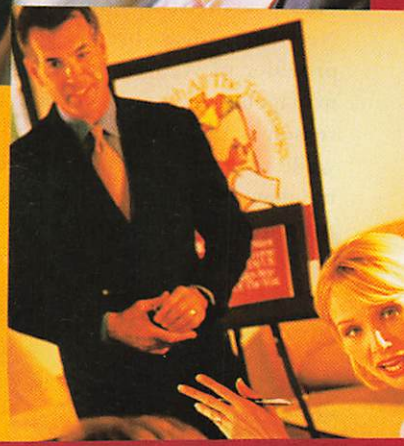

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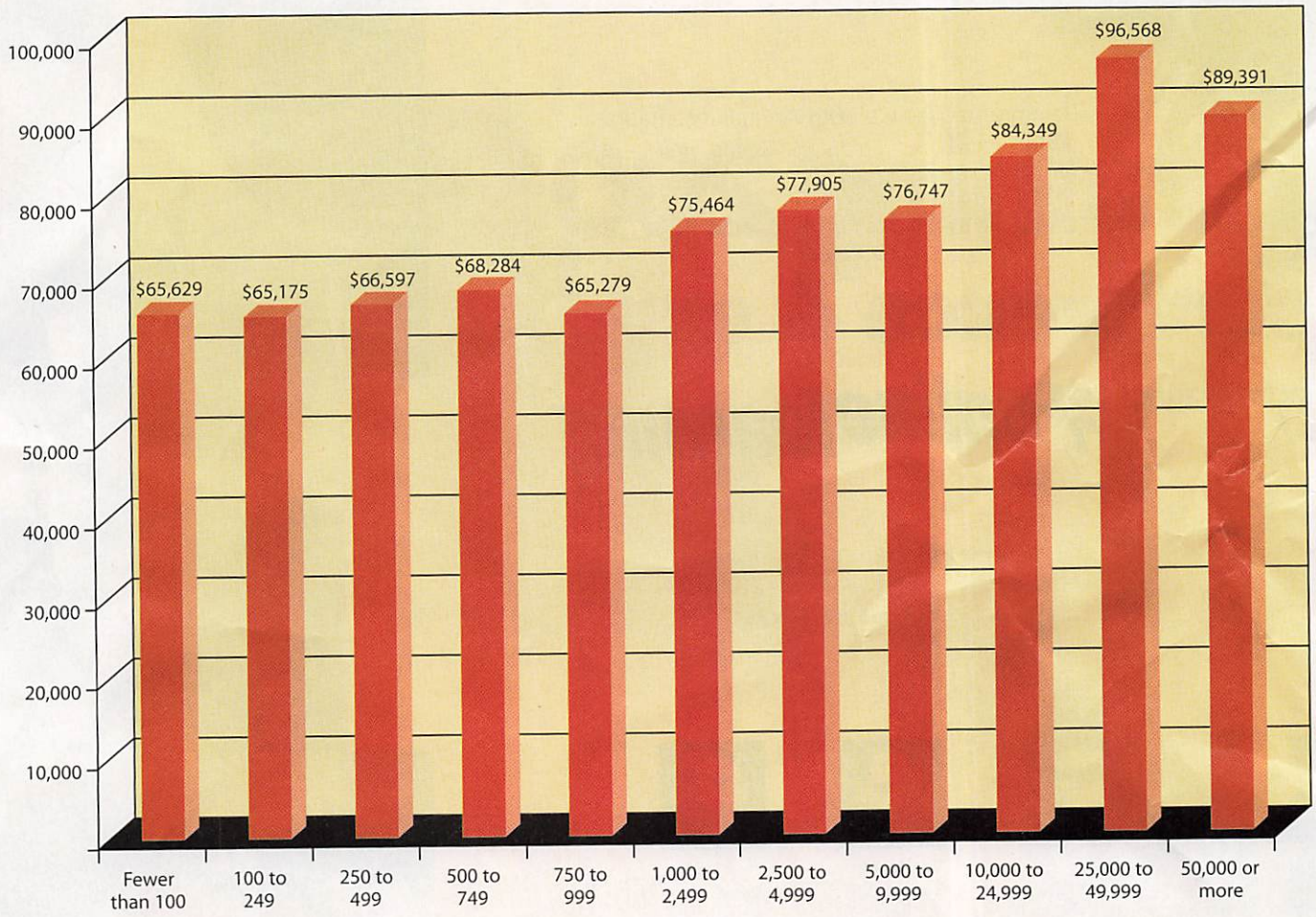
Average Salary Based On Number of Trainees



The average salary for men in our survey was $79,110, while for women it was $69,629, or about 88 percent of what men make.

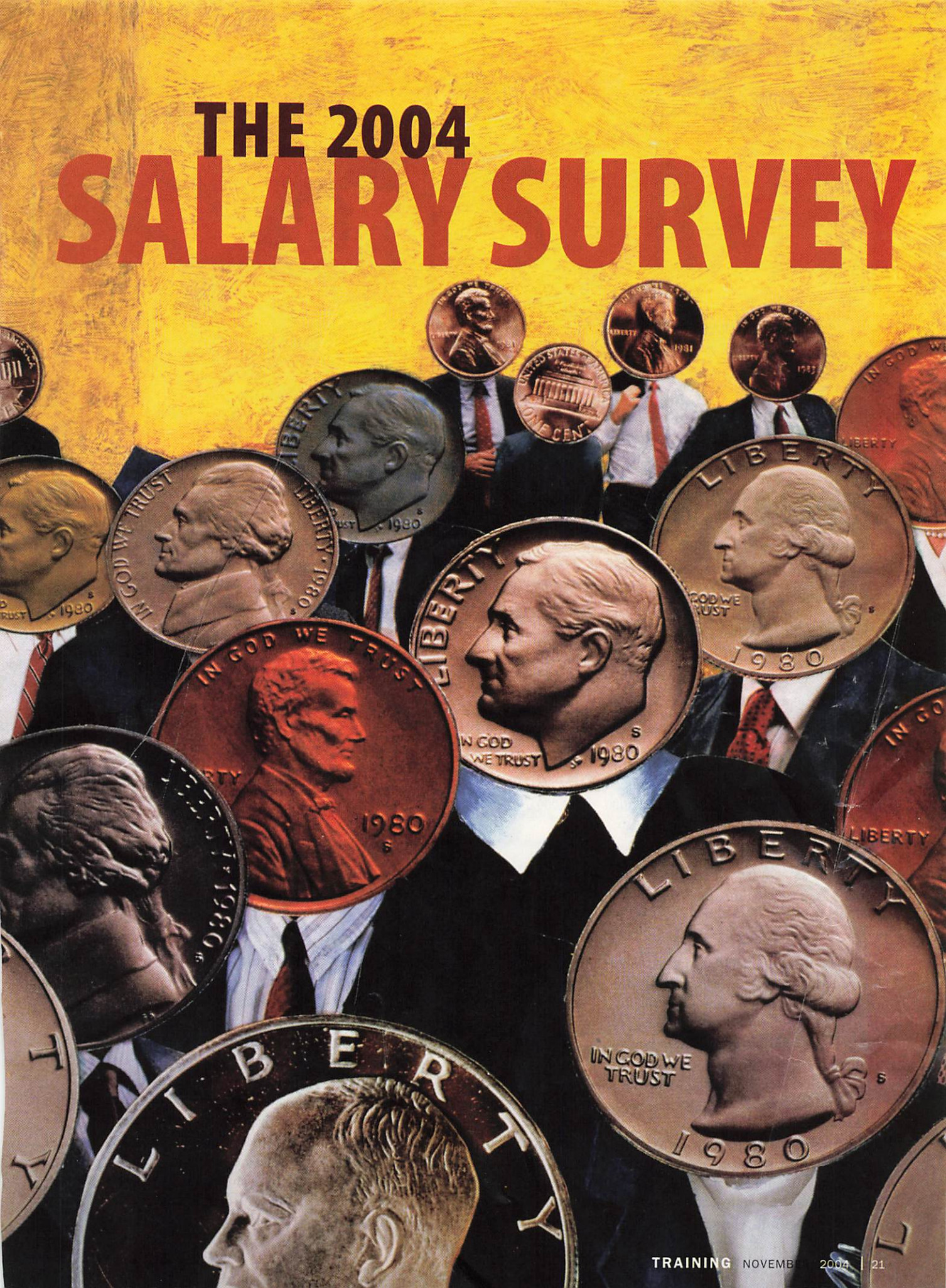
and then rebound," says Coleman, senior vice president of compensation for Needham, Mass.-based Salary.com, a provider of Web-based human capital management data and products. "The reason is that your survey will take a while to catch up with the fact that the training jobs have moved from corporate America to consulting America."

Gender Pay Differences

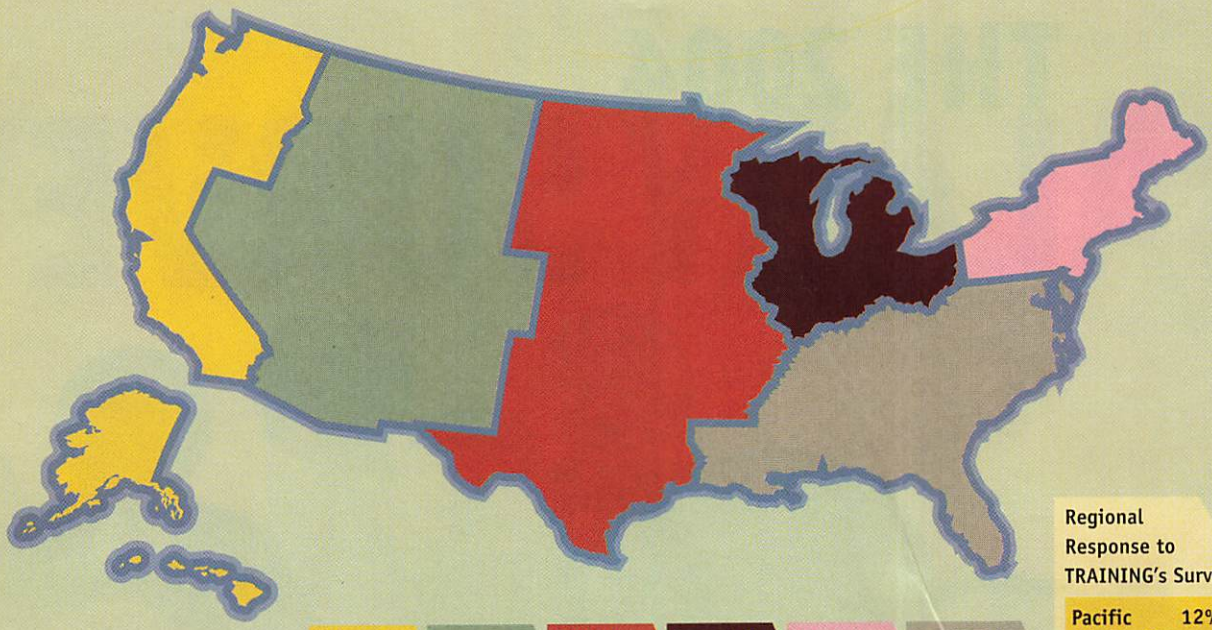
The average salary for men in our survey was $79,110, while for women it was $69,629, or about 88 percent of what men make. That's lower than the 92 percent that *T&D* reported in their survey findings, but that figure may be a reflection of the sample; it's possible that more higher-paid women responded to *T&D's* survey than men. About three times as many women as men participated in that survey.

Either way, as we've discussed in previous years, the difference in pay between the genders doesn't automatically come from discrimination, although some of it probably does. "Those grand, NOW-type surveys, the broad-brush ones that say women make .73 for every dollar men make—that's kind of a crappy statistic," says Coleman. "You're lumping all employees together, whereas more men are the primary breadwinner; more men have been in the workforce their entire adult careers; more women take time off for family reasons. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but they're in the workforce fewer years over the

THE 2004 SALARY SURVEY



TRAINING SALARIES
By Region



	Pacific	West Central	Central	Great Lakes	Northeast	Southeast
Regional Average	$81,012	$64,063	$65,902	$74,108	$79,778	$71,983
Percent Difference*	+9.6%	-13.3%	-10.8%	+.3%	+7.9%	-2.6%
Executive-level management	99,500	77,500	84,000	118,400	114,445	105,000
Executive-level/HRD manager	105,250	105,500	96,855	105,044	105,254	94,842
Department manager (+5 Trainers)	104,462	59,250	81,917	88,620	89,548	78,982
Department manager (1-5 Trainers)	80,774	72,800	69,874	70,529	77,895	75,606
One-person department	72,051	51,500	49,084	59,222	63,787	56,343
IT training manager	80,000	37,300	54,656	78,918	81,667	66,117
Classroom instructor	67,471	40,097	48,591	51,683	71,769	55,177
Instructional designer	78,393	61,667	55,783	62,142	67,375	61,883
CBT/web/multimedia designer	108,250	52,000	45,200	49,000	80,800	63,054
Consultant/outside provider	127,000	48,000	91,250	103,000	150,000	98,889
Personnel manager/specialist	NR	NR	39,086	68,300	63,000	61,667

Regional Response to TRAINING's Survey

- **Pacific 12%** AK, CA, HI, OR, WA
- **West Central 5%** AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY
- **Central 17%** IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, OK, SD, TX
- **Great Lakes 20%** IL, IN, MI, OH, WI
- **Northeast 21%** CT, DE, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT
- **Southeast 23%** AL, AR, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV

*Indicates the difference between each region's average salary and the national average

base pay this year. The survey also showed that organizations reported, on average, a 3.5 percent increase in their salary budgets. That's not large, but it's something, and the survey's projected figures for 2005 indicate a 3.7 percent average increase.

"It's nothing to make you rich; 3.5 percent isn't tons of money," says Amy Jantz, senior compensation manager at WorldAtWork, a Scottsdale, Ariz.-based nonprofit association for research in compensation and benefits. "But it's moving in a positive direction, whereas in the last couple of years we've seen those numbers go in a negative direction."

So that's the good news. The bad news is that it might be a little more complicated than that.

First of all, as always, you have to factor in inflation and cost-of-living increases before you can say that a given salary has actually risen. It may be that between the two, you're really making the same you made two years ago, at least in terms of actual purchasing power. It's hard to say this across the board, since cost of living is different in different areas of the country, but at least we know that inflation has been pretty low in the last couple of years; it averaged 1.59 percent in 2002 and 2.27 percent in 2003. The most recent data available at press time had the inflation rate at 2.99 percent.

Then there's unemployment. Over the last few years, the private sector has lost more than a million jobs, and many of those people still haven't found work. Unemployment means more supply than demand in the job market, which means salaries don't grow as fast. Since the gov-

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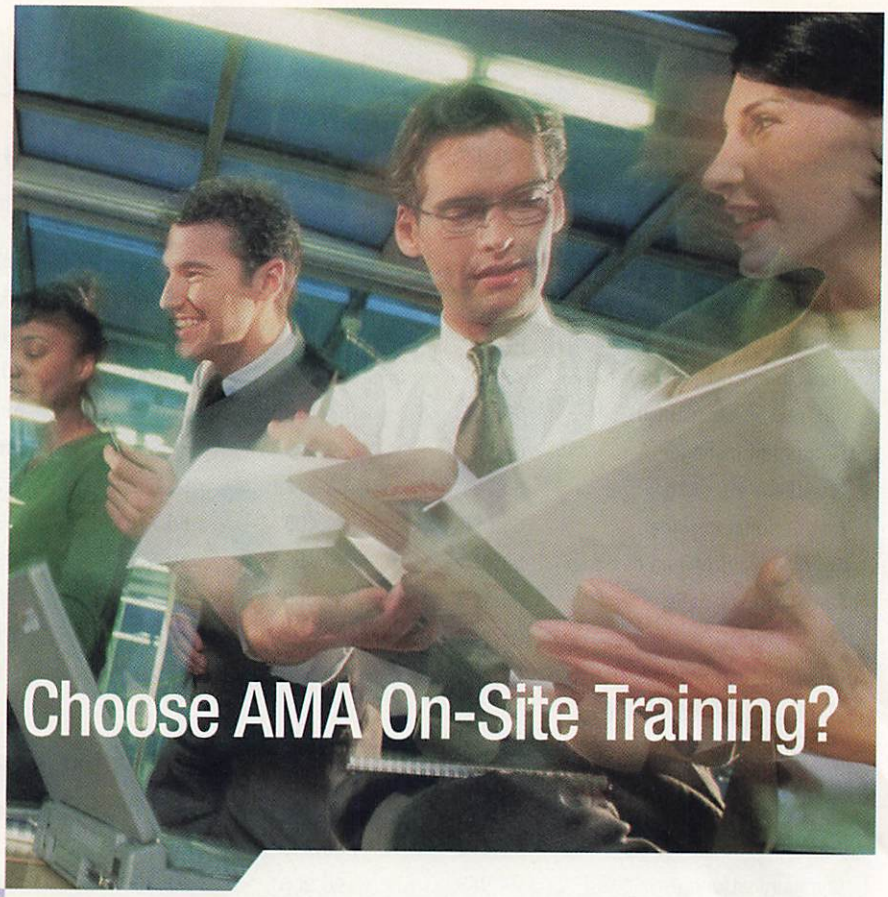

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	OVERALL AVERAGE	FEWER THAN 100	100 – 499	500 – 749	750 – 999	1,000 – 2,499
Average Salary:	**$73,913**	**$74,739**	**$66,947**	**$69,591**	**$70,133**	**$73,418**
JOB CATEGORY						
Executive-level training/ HRD manager	$100,714	$87,789*	$95,750*	$68,000*	$110,000*	$112,333
Executive-level management	103,643	94,636	122,900	75,000*	180,000*	NR
Department manager (5+ Trainers)	85,718	56,000*	77,526	69,281*	80,769*	89,389*
Department manager (1-5 Trainers)	73,987	64,633*	72,631	70,579	75,000*	67,331
One-person department	59,446	53,168	57,505	65,167*	55,167*	64,717
IT training manager	68,982	79,999*	36,850*	106,000*	99,000*	69,000*
Classroom instructor	56,991	54,572*	54,404	67,900*	48,500*	50,573
Instructional designer	65,050	74,409	56,719*	63,500*	62,333*	69,357
CBT/Web/multimedia designer	63,070	69,750*	50,500*	53,250*	NR	39,000*
Career/OD specialist	66,394	61,000*	53,740*	80,750*	65,000*	53,000*
Consultant	101,714	92,500	140,000*	NR	NR	79,999*
Personnel manager/specialist	57,560	NR	55,293*	72,000*	55,900*	48,250*
Staff manager other than training/HRD	72,352	80,750*	63,000*	65,500*	79,000*	46,500*
INDUSTRY						
Manufacturing	77,853	68,000*	63,536	66,063*	75,950*	76,917
Transportation/Utilities	70,294	86,750*	60,173*	41,500*	52,000*	70,250*
Communications	74,983	90,000*	72,800*	75,250*	NR	73,833*
Finance/Bnkg./Real estate/Insur.	76,328	52,300*	63,983	82,571*	103,750*	72,952
Consulting	95,184	90,100	109,408	NR	68,000*	120,000*
Retail/Wholesale/Distribution	74,605	112,000*	78,000*	58,000*	51,500*	73,650*
Hospitality/Business services	76,035	70,471	74,705	66,000*	71,334*	85,850
Health/Medical services	72,086	78,075*	58,396	61,031*	56,000*	68,500
Education/Academic institution	65,391	68,879	59,278	63,400*	56,900*	55,438
Government/Military	59,902	42,725*	62,883	72,923*	53,990*	63,500*
Supplier to training industry	89,175	88,406	70,000*	NR	150,000*	NR
GROSS SALES/FEES						
Less than $1 million	76,108	79,645	55,014*	71,000*	NR	109,000*
$1 million to $49.9 million	68,555	74,240	66,975	69,273	61,389*	65,048
$50 million to $399.9 million	70,696	48,750*	71,623	60,951	73,785	73,356
$400 million to $999.9 million	80,420	NR	63,500*	99,800*	99,323*	87,165
$1 billion to $9.9 billion	83,773	NR	67,500*	69,500*	80,769*	73,571*
$10 billion or more	82,278	NR	NR	NR	NR	92,000*
EDUCATION						
No college degree	63,866	66,485	66,790	49,250*	64,942*	64,167
Associate's degree	62,662	54,300*	54,607	45,000*	55,500*	62,800*
Bachelor's degree	72,870	74,210	65,960	67,250	67,083*	70,754
Master's degree	75,991	77,609	67,668	78,469	68,873	75,802
Ph.D.	89,448	91,643*	81,597	73,945*	101,000*	87,667*
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE						
Three years or less	65,485	64,975	56,524	74,429*	49,374*	59,881
4 to 7 years	65,279	67,316	63,385	59,500	59,952*	57,579
8 to 12 years	73,214	80,403	64,283	80,511*	68,286*	74,397
13 years or more	84,976	80,286	79,892	70,964	89,950	92,239

*Fewer than 10 responses. NR=No responses

2,500 – 9,999	10,000 – 24,999	25,000 – 49,999	50,000 OR MORE
$74,571	**$81,285**	**$80,255**	**$79,644**
$104,207	$97,158	$88,800*	$105,110*
94,250*	79,999*	175,000*	NR
85,171	95,215	103,862*	90,700
74,082	80,757*	85,111*	86,050*
60,270	66,500*	42,500*	69,920*
71,425*	80,943*	71,000*	75,833*
60,517	61,007*	48,120*	92,334*
60,675	63,934	74,500*	60,857*
68,822*	60,840*	72,333*	64,400*
70,269	81,333*	52,000*	64,450*
148,000*	NR	NR	NR
NR	NR	77,000*	NR
70,000*	86,000*	NR	87,665*
85,102	82,930	99,111*	78,447
76,625*	81,060*	51,000*	60,933
83,600*	80,500*	71,588*	69,895*
77,179	85,979	78,230	95,857*
86,125*	84,667*	NR	96,375*
62,087	87,825*	62,000*	94,000*
80,806	70,180*	81,450*	74,102*
69,681	94,358*	84,000*	97,875*
77,774	75,222*	31,000*	77,000*
58,202	56,052*	83,850*	56,873*
NR	79,000*	NR	NR
52,000*	65,000*	NR	NR
59,868	75,570*	68,500*	96,000*
72,637	79,975*	48,867*	74,750*
86,546	66,089	57,000*	61,080*
81,536	86,317	91,410	83,694
86,000*	93,203*	82,380	79,036
65,637	63,175*	59,620	66,582*
68,063*	71,500*	80,500*	72,500*
74,498	82,916	78,853	75,694
72,567	82,700	83,375	87,079
91,206	91,000*	124,500*	68,000*
73,518	99,062*	31,000*	70,333*
67,023	70,460	67,736	72,875
69,091	71,269	70,177	83,775
83,520	88,496	98,968	86,889

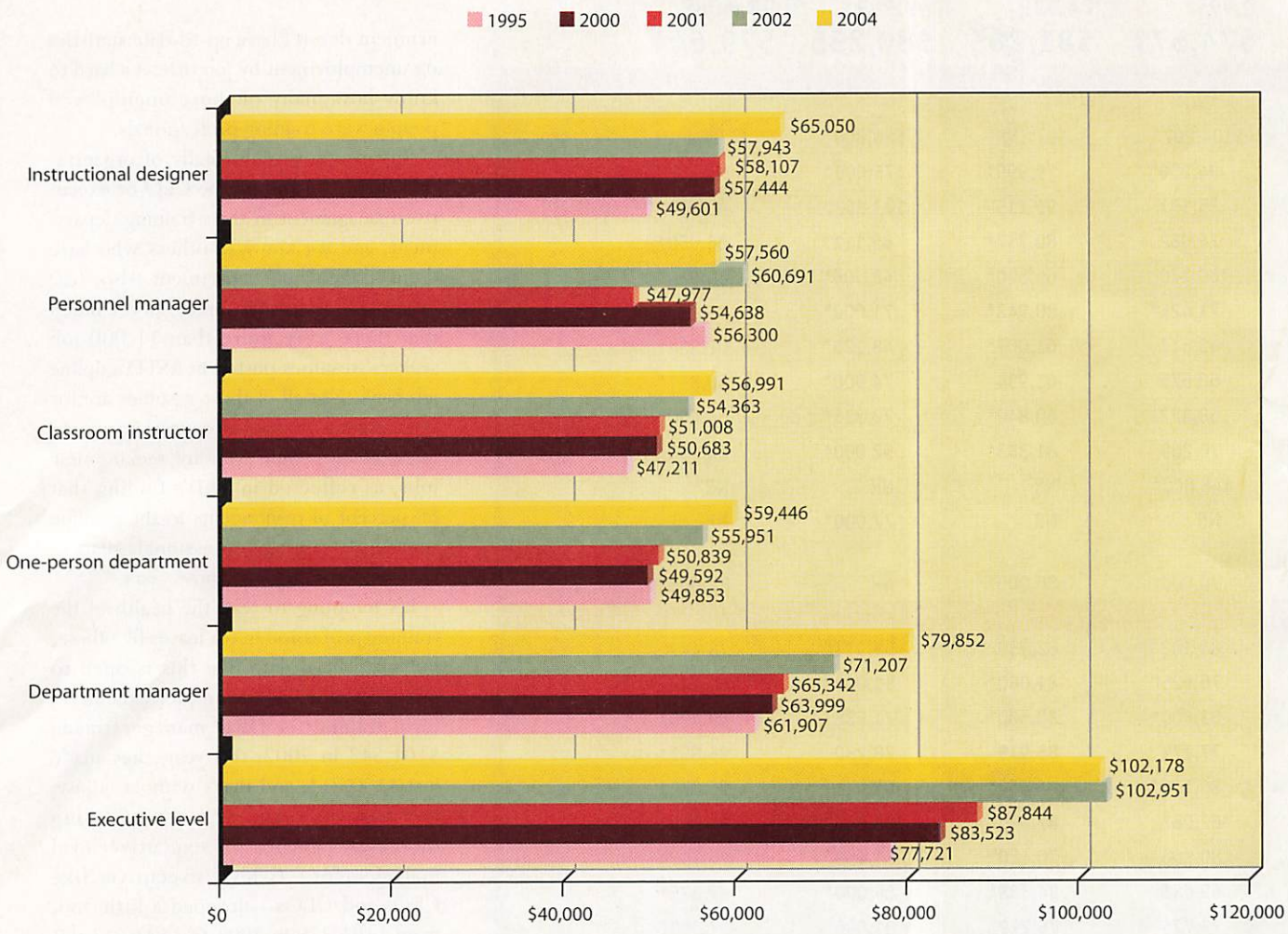
ernment doesn't have up-to-date statistics on unemployment by job title, it's hard to know how many of those unemployed people were training professionals.

But we know anecdotally of organizations that have laid off the CLO or executive management in their training department, and we know of others who have dumped the whole department. Also, *T&D* magazine's May 2004 career survey noted that there were more than 11,000 job seekers' resumes posted in ASTD's online job bank. Not all of those resumes are for unemployed people, of course; many are likely to be people who are seeking new jobs, as reflected in *T&D*'s finding that 88 percent of respondents to their online survey of training professionals plan to change jobs in the next three years.

It's tempting to read the health of the training profession in tea leaves like these, but even hard data like this is open to interpretation. For example, executive-level training or HRD managers made $101,543 in 2002; this year, they made just $100,714, and that's without adjusting for inflation or cost-of-living increases. Salaries for executive-level management—C-level executives like CEOs and CLOs—dropped a little too, from $104,359 in 2002 to $103,643 this year. That might mean that executives in training are being paid less these days. If there are fewer C-level executives in our sample this year because they've been laid off, that wouldn't necessarily account for that drop, because the overall average should remain roughly the same even if the sample is smaller. But if more executives at the higher end of the salary range have been laid off, that would affect our sample, and that may be the case here. So it's possible that since our last survey, training executives with higher salaries haven't been able to escape the budget ax.

Consultants Earning More

You can read the fate of training between other lines, too. Consultants made a lot more money this year than they did in 2002. The overall average for consultants' salaries rose by $23,000 since our last survey, and it rose especially sharply at organizations with 100 to 499 employees (by



"I think more and more companies are trying to build in-house staffs as well as going out to consultants who can really help them develop training programs that are targeted at the kinds of issues in their company and their workforce."

$62,000) and organizations with 2,500 to 4,999 employees (by $93,000). Because these samples are small (less than 10 respondents), it's important to note that those figures may be skewed by one salary that's significantly higher than the rest. But the overall pattern shows that consultants are doing better than any other job title in our survey. Business for consultants is apparently good, and some of that business is coming from outsourcing.

Still, it's unclear how outsourcing of training is affecting salaries in the training profession. When a company outsources part or all of its training function, it can mean layoffs for the training professionals at that company. But John Challenger notes that it can also mean new jobs at the companies winning the outsourcing deals. "I think more and more companies are trying to build in-house staffs as well as going out to consultants who can really help them develop training programs that are targeted at the kinds of issues in their company and their workforce," says Challenger, CEO of Challenger, Gray and Christmas, a Chicago-based outplacement consulting firm.

Bill Coleman says that outsourcing might push salaries both up and down. For example, when companies lay off employees so that jobs can be shipped offshore, that increases supply and depresses salaries in the general job market, including the training job market. But when a company outsources part of its training function, the gain is transferred to consultants or outside contractors.

"I suspect you would find a drop—you would see the [salary] numbers go down

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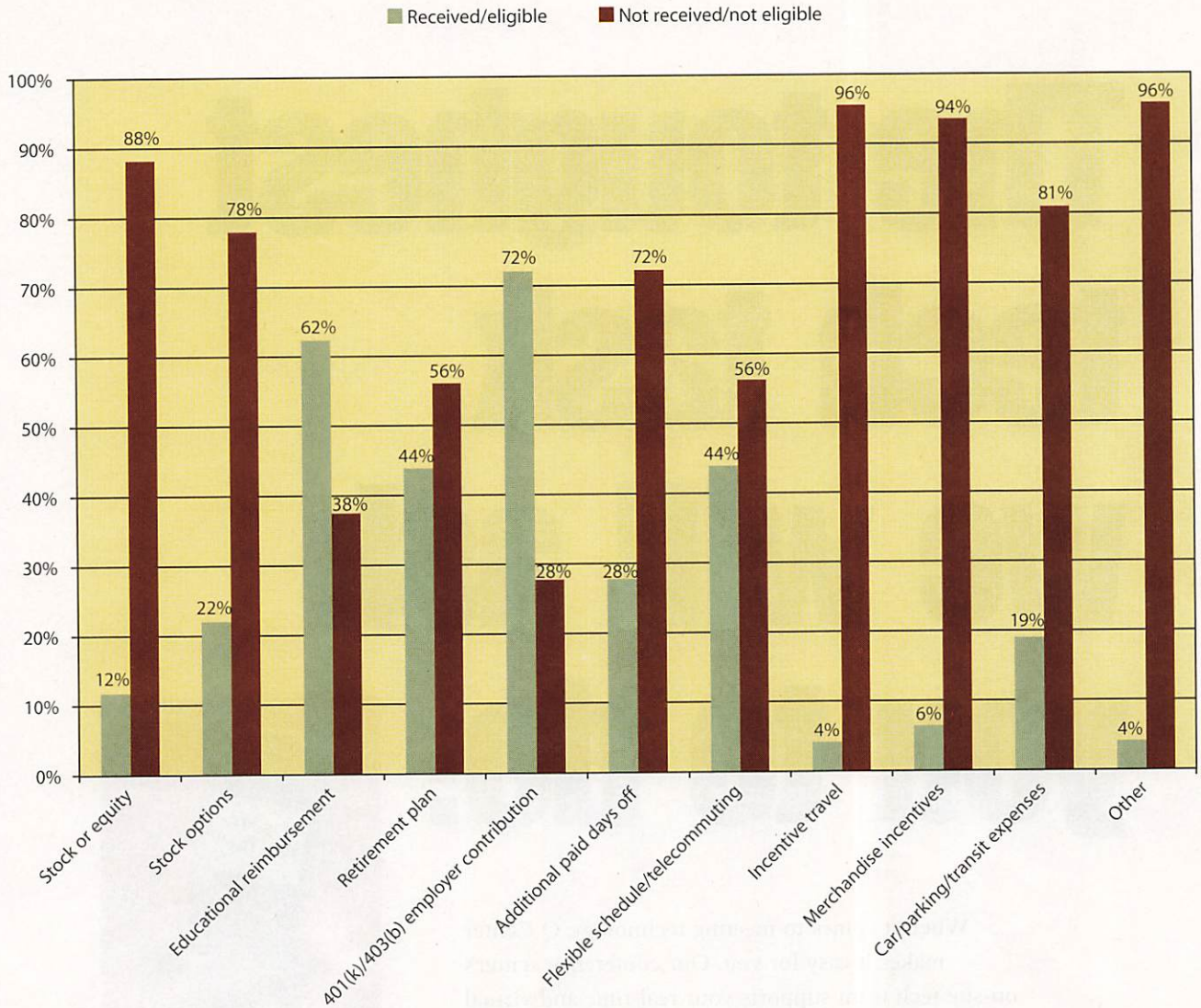


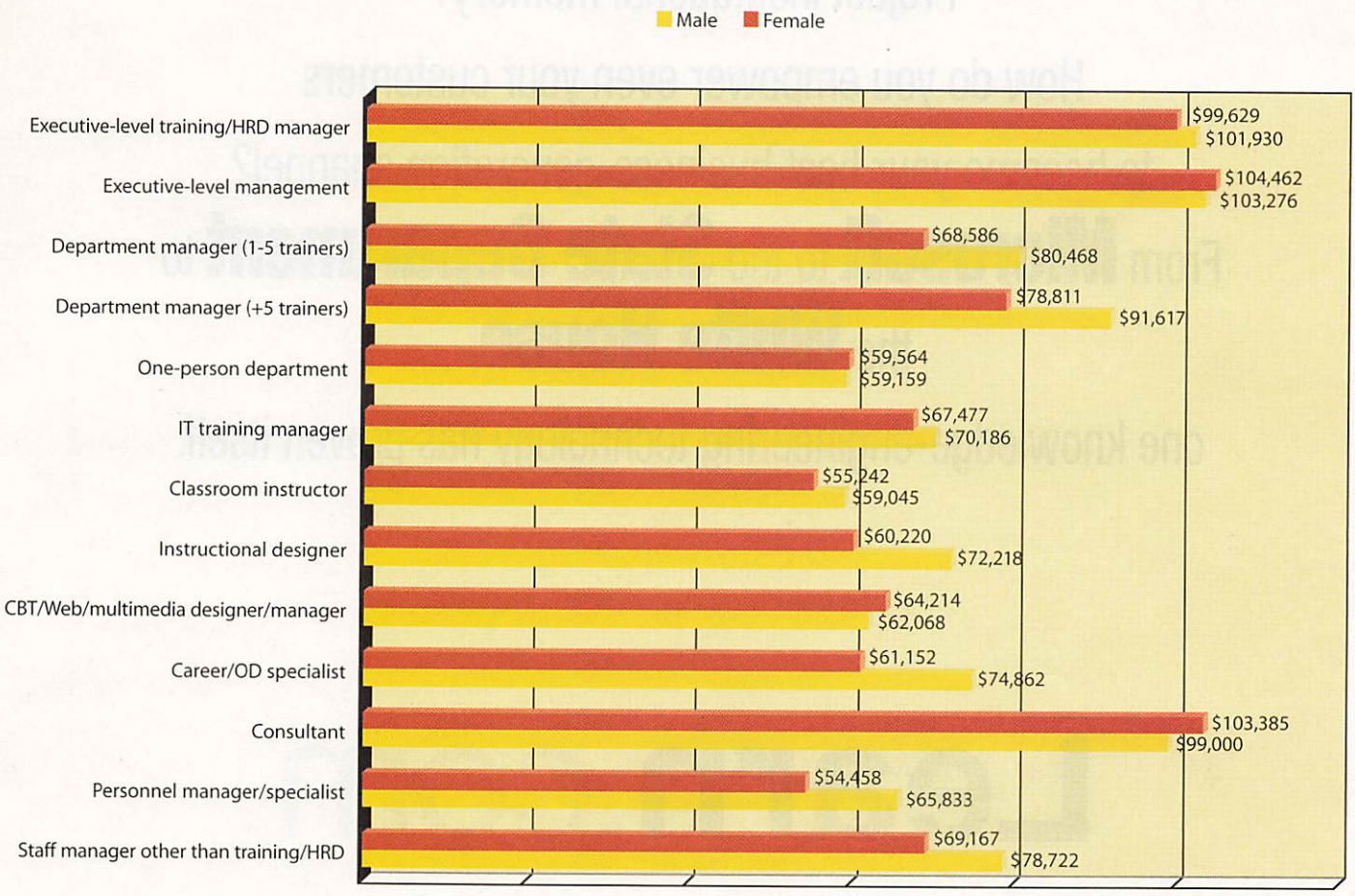
same elapsed period of time."

Our own data bears that out. Women in the sample outnumbered men by 55 to 45 percent. Although more women had four to seven years of experience in our survey, more men (38 percent) than women (31 percent) had 13 years or more. Similarly, although more women had a bachelor's degree than men (38 percent of women to 33 percent of men), more men had a Ph.D. (43 percent) than women (38 percent).

In a couple of job titles, though, there were significant salary gaps. Surprisingly, women whose job title was executive-level management (CEO, CLO, CKO or CIO) made $104,462, while men in the same title made a little less, $103,276. While that small gap probably isn't statistically significant, it does indicate that at some levels women are keeping pace with men. Other gaps, though, are definitely statistically significant in the other direction. On average, men who were training department managers with one to five trainers reporting to them earned $12,000 more than women at the same level. Men with more than five trainers reporting to them earned $13,000 more than women.

We don't know why that is, but Coleman had an educated guess. For example, let's say women tend to end up with female direct reports while men end up with both female and male direct reports. That may not be true, but if it is true, if the salaries of the female direct reports are lower it could have a downward drag on the manager's salary. "It's problematic, but it might also matter who the trainers that report to them are," Coleman says. "The lower-paid the trainers are, the lower-paid your directs are and the lower-paid you will be."

Challenger, whose firm works to place employees (including training professionals) who have been laid off, notes that the investment in training



It's the economy of your own company that matters most when safeguarding or improving your own position. It's finding out what the company values most, and finding ways to make your training efforts support those values.

is still reasonably strong at most companies, and that layoffs of training professionals can be generated by tremendous pressures to keep costs down. He also feels there has been a change in which training programs have perceived value these days. "It feels to me like there's less focus on leadership training or soft skills; I think those are not quite as much in vogue as they were in the '90s," he says. "It's more about hard skills and real know-how and measurable change in people's behavior."

Wiser heads than ours have tried and failed to forecast when the U.S. economy might pick up steam again, so we won't even try. But it's the economy of your own company that matters most when safeguarding or improving your own position. It's finding out what the company values most, and finding ways to make your training efforts support those values. For example, this month's Web essay details how the performance evaluation process at your company can contribute to risk management and increase the training or HR department's perceived value. We think the salary survey gives you an idea of what you're worth; it's up to you to show your company what you're worth.

HOLLY DOLEZALEK *is the associate editor of* Training. *edit@trainingmag.com*

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TRBA

A GUIDE TO

Learning Content Management Systems

BY SUE O. HALL AND BRANDON HALL

Plagued by market confusion, LCMSs have been slower to take hold than their LMS counterparts. However, marrying the two systems can result in robust environments that are capable of making the once-formidable process of managing learning content almost as easy as flipping a switch. Here's a look at the LCMS landscape, including what they can do, how they differ from LMSs, and what to look for if you are in the market for one.

Electronic content management, which automates the process of storing, searching for, and reusing data in a centralized way, has been gaining ground in major corporations around the world for years. Indeed, from enterprise resource management (ERM) and customer relationship management (CRM) to human resources management (HRM) and other enterprise systems, organizations both large and small are now using such systems to pull huge chunks of disparate information into centralized databases—allowing a handful of colossal skyscrapers to stand where hundreds, if not thousands, of small buildings once stood.

Although not as widely used as other enterprise systems, learning content management systems (LCMSs)—which allow developers not only to create but manage course content in a centralized way—are just as vital to the success of today's learning organizations. They allow those involved in the course development process to forgo hours of manual work, quickly reuse and reconfigure already existing course content, automate the updating and versioning process, and create multiple courses for multiple purposes using the same content.

LCMS Benefits

At its core, an LCMS applies the primary functions of content management—storing, searching for and reusing content—to the training development process. In an LCMS, content is chunked (typically into learning objects, which are small, reusable pieces of content), then managed, published and delivered on demand.

What is the promise of an LCMS? By managing content in a highly accessible, automated database where the work of untold legions of training professionals is combined into one centralized hub, those who need to design a course from scratch, build a new course using existing content, or find chunks of knowledge or learning objects to plug into a course under development can do so in a flash. In short, LCMSs can make the most of existing content while at the same time supporting rapid development of new content.

That's a broad overview of LCMS capability. What about the nitty-gritty of day-to-day LCMS functionality? The staff of brandon-hall.com, a learning research and consulting company based in Sunnyvale, Calif., recently surveyed 27 LCMS providers and compiled its findings into the "LCMS 2004-2005 Report: Comparative Analysis of Enterprise Learning Content Management Systems." Here are just a few examples of how LCMS technology can benefit the content development process—and the learning professionals who are a part of it.

Faster Development. Most LCMSs offer a what-you-see-is-what-you-get authoring environment, which allows content developers, instructional designers, and subject matter experts to quickly create and publish just-in-time training.

Collaboration. Storing learning content in an LCMS provides functionality that surpasses what typical learning authoring tools allow. Many LCMSs also have check-in and check-out capabilities that enable multiple users in various locations to access and work within the same course simultaneously. Meanwhile, versioning features support collaborative efforts by offering quick and easy backups.

Reuse. A robust search capability, one that allows content developers to search for content and reuse it, is one of the primary appeals of an LCMS. For example, large retailers can create one learning module to teach safety regulations to employees, then use the same module again in multiple courses later on. LCMSs also allow instructional designers to create the same content for publication in various formats. For example, a safety regulation module might be published as a Web-based course for employees who have access to the Internet—and as a student workbook for those who do not.

Quick, global updates. With most LCMSs, course developers can link to a learning object. This means that the same learning object can exist in multiple locations—but when it's time to update the content of that object, the update can be done in one location and all instances of it throughout the system will update automatically.

LCMS vs. LMS

It's been difficult for buyers to engage in the debate over whether it's best to purchase an LMS, LCMS or both. This is partly due to the fact that many buyers fail to grasp the distinctions between the two systems. And *that* is

In its role as supreme ruler of content management, the LCMS is the workhorse that puts the most essential pieces of the learning puzzle—namely, courses and learning materials—together.

because, in large part, many LMS and LCMS vendors and an array of industry pundits have failed to communicate those distinctions to the buying public.

Although many vendors offer combination LCMS/LMS systems, there are core differences between the two. An LCMS manages content (the components that make up a course), while an LMS manages learners (who's taking what, completion ratios, course progress status, scheduling, etc.).

In its role as supreme ruler of content management, the LCMS is the workhorse that puts the most essential pieces of the learning puzzle—namely, courses and learning materials—together. LCMSs package content for print, CD-ROM or electronic publication, and most are capable of importing pre-packaged content from other learning content development tools like Microsoft Word or Macromedia Dreamweaver.

In addition to managing and packaging content, course developers also often use LCMSs as a primary authoring tool for developing learning content. It's important to note that the LCMS's ability to cleanly import content from various sources is crucial in today's learning organizations. In a recent brandon-hall.com survey that took an in-depth look at the most frequently used authoring tools, results indicated that most content developers who use LCMSs utilize relatively low-tech methods of development. In fact, despite the recent proliferation of high-tech do-it-all authoring tools like Macromedia Dreamweaver and Flash, 65 percent of e-learning developers use comparably simple software programs like Microsoft Word and PowerPoint (sometimes all by themselves and sometimes in conjunction with higher-tech authoring tools).

Finally, once learning content is published, it needs to be posted in a location where administrators and students have access to it. That's where an LMS enters the picture. In addition to providing access to content, an LMS allows companies to manage competencies and courses, assign students to specific training events, and track student progress and performance.

What To Buy

When beginning the purchasing process, which LCMSs should you look at? According to brandon-hall.com's research, there are several robust LCMSs available to meet a variety of buyer needs. A few products, however, do stand out from the pack. In no particular order, they are: Evolution from Outstart Inc. in Boston; Generation21 Enterprise from Generation21 in Golden, Colo.; LearnExact from Giunti Interactive Labs in Genova, Italy; Vuepoint Learning System from Vuepoint in Roslyn Heights, N.Y.; TopClass Publisher from WBT Systems in Dublin, Ireland; and TotalLCMS from SumTotal in Mountain View, Calif. These products not only provide advanced features such as workflow, dynamic testing, and knowledge management, they are the products mentioned most often when competing companies are asked, "Who is your primary competitor?"

That said, new LCMS companies are entering the market continually, and many bring innovative features and attractive price tags to the table, creating a niche market into which very few large LCMS vendors, with their high price

tags and complex systems, have jumped. Boutique vendors such as KnowledgeOne from LeadingWay in Irvine, Calif., and Xtention CA/MS from Xtention in Columbia, S.C., for example, are well suited to small learning development teams that are creating more new content than they're converting. Additionally, several LCMSs new to the market this year focus on ease of use, thereby landing somewhere between being an authoring tool and a full-fledged LCMS. Meanwhile, still other vendors have entered the market with LCMSs that are built for the express purpose of sitting on top of an existing (and not necessarily learning-related) content management system such as Documentum from EMC Documentum in Pleasanton, Calif., and convert-

Deciding Factors

So now that you have a handle on LCMSs, should you jump into the fray? As with any major purchase, there are several things to consider before any money changes hands. According to those we surveyed, here are some of the most important factors:

1. Ease of use. Look for tools that developers will find easy to use and get proficient with quickly. If developers have experience using traditional authoring tools, they will probably find LCMS authoring environments user-friendly. If your developers are accustomed to using Word applications, however, look for environments with Word-inspired icons and commands.

2. Delivery platform. Many organizations want to create courses once and publish them many times in different ways. According to brandon-hall.com's research of 27 LCMSs, all systems can create e-learning, but only 63 percent allow users to publish content to a CD-ROM, and only 59 percent support print-based learning. With that in mind, be sure you assess current and future output platforms and choose an LCMS that can support your needs.

3. Compliance with standards. Brandon-hall.com's research indicates that 89 percent of LCMSs are shareable content object reference model (SCORM)-compliant and 67 percent comply with standards set forth by the Aviation Industry CBT Committee (AICC). Making certain that your LCMS-driven training complies with widely adopted industry standards like these is crucial to ensuring that your courses will work in standards-compliant LMSs.

4. Support for legacy content. If your company has a library of courses that needs to be converted into learning objects, an LCMS is ideal. However, be certain that the LCMS you are considering supports the importation of content with minimal clean-up. For example, many LCMSs import Word and PowerPoint documents, but formatting of original content is often adversely affected in the process, requiring time-consuming manual fine-tuning. If you make ease of content conversion a top priority, it will save you money in the long run. You should also ask prospective vendors whether they provide services to import legacy content into the LCMS as part of the implementation process.

5. Interoperability with an existing LMS. Many organizations shopping for an LCMS already have an LMS. If this applies to you, it's vital that your two systems work together. Seventy percent of the 27 vendors featured in this year's brandon-hall.com research offer combined LCMS/LMS solutions—though you should keep in mind that this does not necessarily mean that a new LCMS can't be used with your existing LMS. If you want to add an LCMS to your existing LMS, narrow down the LCMS vendors that have performed compatibility testing with your existing LMS. This shouldn't be difficult to do; brandon-hall.com research shows that 76 percent of LCMS vendors have tested their product with at least one LMS.

6. The benefits of XML. The extent to which extensible markup language (XML) is used can tip the balance in favor of a certain system. The primary advantage of systems that support XML output is that XML is a non-proprietary format, which means that content is saved in an easily transferable state. According to a brandon-hall.com survey of products, 70 percent of LCMSs support XML output. In many instances, however, that output doesn't necessarily transfer directly from the LCMS to just any delivery platform. Out of the products that do output to XML, for example, a mere 11 percent output directly to a handheld device. In short, while an LCMS's support of XML is undeniably valuable, savvy buyers should find out how easy it really is to transfer XML output from a prospective system.

—S.H. and B.H.

Buying a combination LMS/LCMS means you can manage a relationship with one vendor rather than two, and you won't have to manage inter-vendor relationships either.

ing content of any kind into a learning object that can be published in multiple formats.

In the end, despite the many differences that exist between competing LCMS products, the fact remains that, with a few notable exceptions, most LCMSs share a list of comparable features. The key difference among them, then, boils down to implementation. When in doubt, look for one that provides ease of use and flexibility—as well as a system that matches the capabilities of your developers.

LCMS And LMS Advantages

When LMSs and LCMSs first burst onto the radar, about half of available systems featured combined LCMS/LMS capabilities. Over time, as LMS products became increasingly larger and more complex, however, the majority of user organizations dropped or stopped using their LCMS capabilities, believing that LMSs were essential while LCMSs were merely elective. As a result, LCMSs slowly began to fade into obscurity. Even today, in fact, brandon-hall.com research indicates that LMS implementations outnumber LCMS implementations nine to one.

But the landscape is shifting; many LMS vendors once again have begun to include LCMS functionality into their systems. This trend is due, in part, to a natural market evolution. That is, buyers always want better tools and more capabilities to help them get their jobs done. But it's also a trend borne of necessity. Both fledgling and established LCMS vendors, for example, have begun to extend their systems to include LMS functionality. By combining the two systems, prospective LCMS customers needn't stall their RFP process in order to research and buy an accompanying LMS.

While these are hopeful trends for buyers, it can nevertheless be confusing to shop for just an LCMS when so many systems include an LMS as well. If this applies to you, what should you do? First, keep in mind that there are benefits to purchasing combination products. Buying a combination LMS/LCMS means you can manage a relationship with one vendor rather than two, and you won't have to manage inter-vendor relationships either. One caveat: Companies that opt for combined products should be certain their needs are met with both systems. This may require some weighting of business requirements, so look for more flexibility to accept the LCMS capabilities in your LMS—rather than the reverse.

If you already have an LMS in place and don't plan to purchase a combined system, don't worry. Just be certain that you do everything possible to ensure that your new LCMS will be compatible with your existing LMS before you buy.

Given these considerations, the process of choosing the right LCMS may seem like a daunting task. Your list of requirements will likely be long—course conversion and creation; matching content developers' capabilities; and continued function existing technology while implementing a new system. Keep in mind, however, that it can be done. The trick is to do your homework, clearly define your needs and which vendors are capable of meeting them, and then make an educated decision.

SUE O. HALL *is a senior researcher and* **BRANDON HALL** *is CEO and lead researcher at brandon-hall.com, a learning research and consulting firm headquartered in Sunnyvale, Calif. edit@trainingmag.com.*

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Skills Unlocked

BY HEATHER JOHNSON

MidAmerican Energy Uses Profiling System To Find Skilled, Ready-To-Hire Meter Readers

The economy might just be on its way up, and subsequently the same holds true for employment. The U.S. Department of Labor projects that total employment will increase by 21.3 million jobs, or 15 percent, between 2002 and 2012. Employers need to fill these jobs, but find that skills are on their way down.

"Years ago you could have 10 qualified applicants for the position, and if you had someone who wasn't strong, you just didn't hire them," explains RickiAnn Saylor, vice president of professional development services for ACT, an Iowa City, Iowa, non-profit organization that provides assessments, research, information and program management services. "But we may not be in a position to do that

"If we simply do not have enough bodies, we may find ourselves hiring people who are not as strong as we need them to be."

in the future. If we simply do not have enough bodies, we may find ourselves hiring people who are not as strong as we need them to be. This notion of foundational skills and what we can do to remediate is going to become a huge issue in the national workforce." For many, it already is.

ACT is best known for its college admissions test—the one every high school junior dreads—that focuses on the transition from high school to college. But in the early 1990s, ACT began wondering if perhaps another significant part of the population was not being attended to. What about those who did not go to college? Or those who did not go to college immediately after high school? It was these questions that took ACT through two years of research, says Saylor.

Through a series of national focus groups with employers and businesses, ACT asked if there were difficulties associated with the school-to-work transition. Were entry-level employees adequately prepared to join the workforce? "We got a resounding 'no'," Saylor says. "We heard that they were not prepared, and that employers were hiring them and then having to do inappropriate kinds of remedial training for basic foundational skills."

Reading, applied mathematics, and what ACT now refers to as locating information were the foundational skills employers said were lacking the most. So ACT created a two-part system called Workkeys, a two-part skills assessment for employers who want to find employees with the appropriate skill sets in.

Meter-Reading ABCs

MidAmerican Energy was having trouble with its entry-level hiring, specifically in finding skilled, ready-to-hire meter readers. "We had about a 50 percent turnover rate. We did not have a good, diverse recruiting pool, and a lot of the hiring was done just by word of mouth," says Julie Sorci, manager of staffing for the Des Moines energy producer. "We were also having customer service issues because people were not making accurate meter reads."

This was greatly increasing customer complaints, and MidAmerican was determined to find a pre-employment selection tool that would help them hire more skilled people. Through the Iowa workforce development office, the equivalent of an unemployment office, MidAmerican learned of Workkeys.

One part of Workkeys is a profiling system, which Saylor believes is what makes Workkeys unique. A skill profile is created for a particular job by asking what foundational skills are necessary and which ones are most important for a particular position. Saylor takes reading as an example. "I can think of very few jobs that don't require reading," she says. "Look at an elementary school teacher and a paralegal. Both require reading, but the paralegal's level of reading is much more complex and detailed." Skills

Keys On A Different Chain

Workkeys, an assessment program developed by ACT, an Iowa City, Iowa, independent, non-profit organization that provides assessments, research, information and program management services, is used for more than just searching for the perfect entry level employees.

For example, Midland, Mich.-based Dow Chemical Co. uses Workkeys to ensure better success for its process engineer training, says Oliver Cummings, director of test development for ACT. Workkeys assessments are administered to qualify people for training, and this pre-training assessment generally cuts back on training time and increases the training's effectiveness.

Amtrak, based in Washington, D.C., uses Workkeys to support its promotion process. "Employees who are seeking to be promoted must take Workkeys and demonstrate that they have the profile of the job they want to move into," explains RickiAnn Saylor, ACT's vice president of professional development services.

"We started Workkeys by looking at the critical transition for entry-level employees," says Saylor. "But the system has moved well beyond that now with many different uses."

ACT conducted a survey in 2002 to ask its clients where they used Workkeys—selection, training, retention or promotion. Results revealed that more than 50 percent of ACT's corporate users were using Workkeys to help in selection processes, and more than 50 percent were using it to aid training.—H.J.

WorkKeys®

for particular positions are ranked in order of most importance.

The other part is assessments—10 different tests, each on a foundational skill such as reading, writing, math and even skills not often thought about such as observational and listening skills. These skills are assessed in academic settings, but these tests cannot be used to assess the same skills in a workplace, because the approach is totally different. Saylor explains: "The tests are all contextualized for the workplace. For example, with applied mathematics, in an academic test, the question would ask you to solve for the two variables in a quadratic equation. You're never going to see that in a Workkeys test. You have to calculate something, and it's going to be related to the workplace and a job task. It may have the same underlying mathematical theories, but it'll never just ask you to solve for the quadratic equation."

The tests generally take between 30 and 55 minutes and are created to be administered in a proctored environment, much like the ACT college admissions exam. Most of the tests are paper and pencil or computer-based, although a few are video-based. All follow the same basic test-taking format. "All of the tests involve information handling, application of judgment and complex problem-solving," says Oliver Cummings, director of test development for ACT.

Put these two parts—the job profile and the assessment—on top of one another and you find out if you have a qualified candidate and where the gaps are.

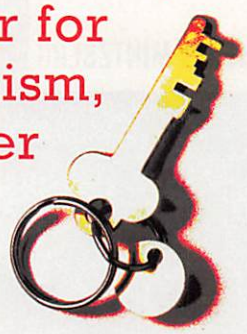
MidAmerican had to profile its meter reader job first, and decided that reading for information, locating information and observation were the crucial skills for a job that places employees in uncontrollable environments, including uneven terrain, dogs and basements. Perhaps these factors seem trivial, but when dealing with individuals' safety, they can be significant and sometimes costly for MidAmerican.

MidAmerican provides the tests on these skills at area workforce development offices and always in paper-and-pencil form so that those who have limited computer experience are not at a disadvantage. Sorci says they encourage all test takers to visit the Web site and go through available tutorials that explain what will be required of them during the test. A pretest is also available online for $4.

Since administering Workkeys assessments, MidAmerican has reduced its overall turnover by 50 percent, and turnover for causes such as absenteeism, insubordination and other improper employee behavior has dropped 73 percent.

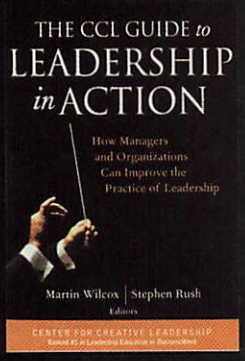
Sorci says the number of accidents has decreased, and observational skills have increased, improving customer service as a whole. Even in noticing things like newspapers stacking up on a porch or a dog running loose that's normally in the house, meter readers have become more community-conscious. Those who go through the tests are moving much more quickly through MidAmerican's apprentice programs, and the objective tests have provided a much more diverse employee pool. MidAmerican has profiled additional positions including technicians, plant utility helpers, power plant operators, and assistant unit operators and plans to use Workkeys' assessments for these as well.

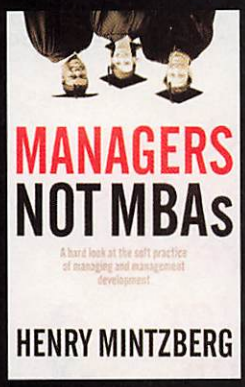
Since administering Workkeys assessments, MidAmerican has reduced its overall turnover by 50 percent, and turnover for causes such as absenteeism, insubordination and other improper employee behavior has dropped 73 percent.



Focusing on employees' foundational skills, or lack thereof, might just be one of the necessary keys for employers to successfully hire in the future. "In terms of a pyramid, the bottom layer is personality testing, behavioral characteristics—things that are pretty hard to change," explains Cummings. "The other extreme, the top layer, is the job-specific testing like a fire lieutenant's exam. Then in between these are the foundational skills. You get a lot of interest and activity in the business world on the two ends, but the middle is the forgotten part."

HEATHER JOHNSON *is the former assistant editor of* Training. *edit@trainingmag.com*





"The strategies for building a formal mentoring program are the same whether you are designing a program of six partnerships or sixty."

The Keys To Mentoring Success

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THE CCL GUIDE TO LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

MARTIN WILCOX AND STEPHEN RUSH, EDITORS

Jossey-Bass, $34

The CCL Guide to Leadership in Action is a compilation of articles from the Center for Creative Leadership's publication, *Leadership in Action*. It's kind of a "best of" *Leadership in Action*. Thirty-eight practitioners, authors and leaders contribute to this excellent text.

Organized into two parts, "Creating Healthy Leaders" and "Creating Healthy Organizations," the subject matter is as diverse as the cadre of authors, making for a rich, worthwhile read. Leadership and stress, global leadership, diversity and succession planning are just a few of the topics addressed. Some articles are drawn from issues that have surfaced in CCL's research and development. There are also several articles that include interviews with experts like Margaret Wheatley and Peter Block.

The following articles stood out for me. The first article in the book ("Making the Connection: Leadership Skills and Emotional Intelligence," by Marian N. Ruderman and others) was thought-provoking and spurred me to research more on this subject. Based on current research, this article examines the relationships found between leadership abilities and emotional intelligence and between leadership derailment characteristics and emotional intelligence. "The Missing Link: Organizational Culture and Leadership Development," by Vidula Bal and Laura Quinn, examines leadership in the context of one of my favorite subjects: organizational culture.

As if that weren't enough, I learned a new word—metathesiophobia. Perhaps some of you already know that's the word for the fear of change—always a challenging issue for leaders.

—Janice Love

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MANAGERS NOT MBAS

BY HENRY MINTZBERG

Berrett-Koehler Publishers, $27.95

This is another jewel from the independent folks at Berrett-Koehler. I admit a hometown bias toward their catalog, but when they can get Henry Mintzberg to write for them that's a good sign in two ways: One, they are attracting brilliant authors; and two, some treats are in store for us.

Though you needn't go back and read Mintzberg's other award-winning works such as *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning* (Free Press, 1994), *The Nature of Managerial Work* (Addison-Wesley, 1973), and his *Harvard Business Review* pieces prior to picking this one up, it wouldn't hurt. His main assertion here is that there is a built-in overemphasis in business school curricula upon management of a business as a science, when in fact there is more art and craft required for working with people and other resources to achieve desired goals.

No doubt you have found yourself in a project or two where someone with an MBA was in a position of influence and you soon concluded that the individual was incapable of managing his or her way out of a paper bag. In my experience the management skill on display is often in inverse proportion to the prestige level of the business school involved, with all due respect to the challenges and rigor of the school in question.

Mintzberg calls for a new approach, asserting that the wrong people are being trained in the wrong ways, leading to several sets of wrong consequences. It is my hope that deans of the major business schools will read Chapter 9, "Developing Management Education," preferably aloud and together, and that practicing managers will do the same with Chapter 12, "Learning on the Job." Had Mintzberg quit writing after completing only these two extraordinary sections of the book, he would deserve a major book award and the accolades that come with it. When you add in the rest, what you have is easily the greatest work on the studies and practices of management and the development of managers ever written.

—Skip Corsini

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THE MINDFUL COACH

BY DOUGLAS K. SILSBEE

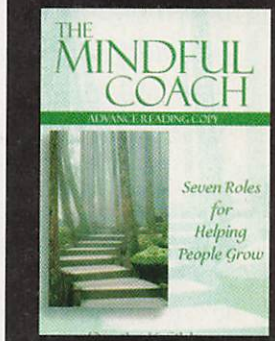
Ivy River Press, $18.95

The Mindful Coach weaves together concepts from Zen Buddhism and the metaphor of a musical septet to introduce the Septet Coaching Model—a model designed to help us become "mindful" coaches. It's an interesting, if unusual, combination. "By cultivating mindfulness," Silsbee says, "we become better able to make wise choices about how we can best serve our clients." Silsbee takes his definition of the word mindful from *Awakening the Buddha Within* (Broadway Books, 1998) by Lama Surya Das—"to be aware of our bodies, aware of our feelings and emotions, aware of our thoughts, and aware of events, as they occur, moment by moment."

This whole thing probably sounds a bit esoteric. But what he says actually makes perfect sense, is easy to remember because of the septet analogy, and has practical application.

He describes the Septet Coaching Model as "... an architecture for seeing the coaching process more clearly, and for becoming aware of the roles that coaches play ..." Those roles (or "voices," as he calls them) are the master, partner, investigator, reflector, teacher, guide and contractor. He discusses each voice in detail, listing the aspects of the voice and giving examples using sample coaching scenarios. He gives us guidelines on how and when to use each voice, and discusses the pitfalls of each.

The last part of the book is devoted to practical application and includes numerous exercises, questionnaires, and self-assessment tools. —*Janice Love*



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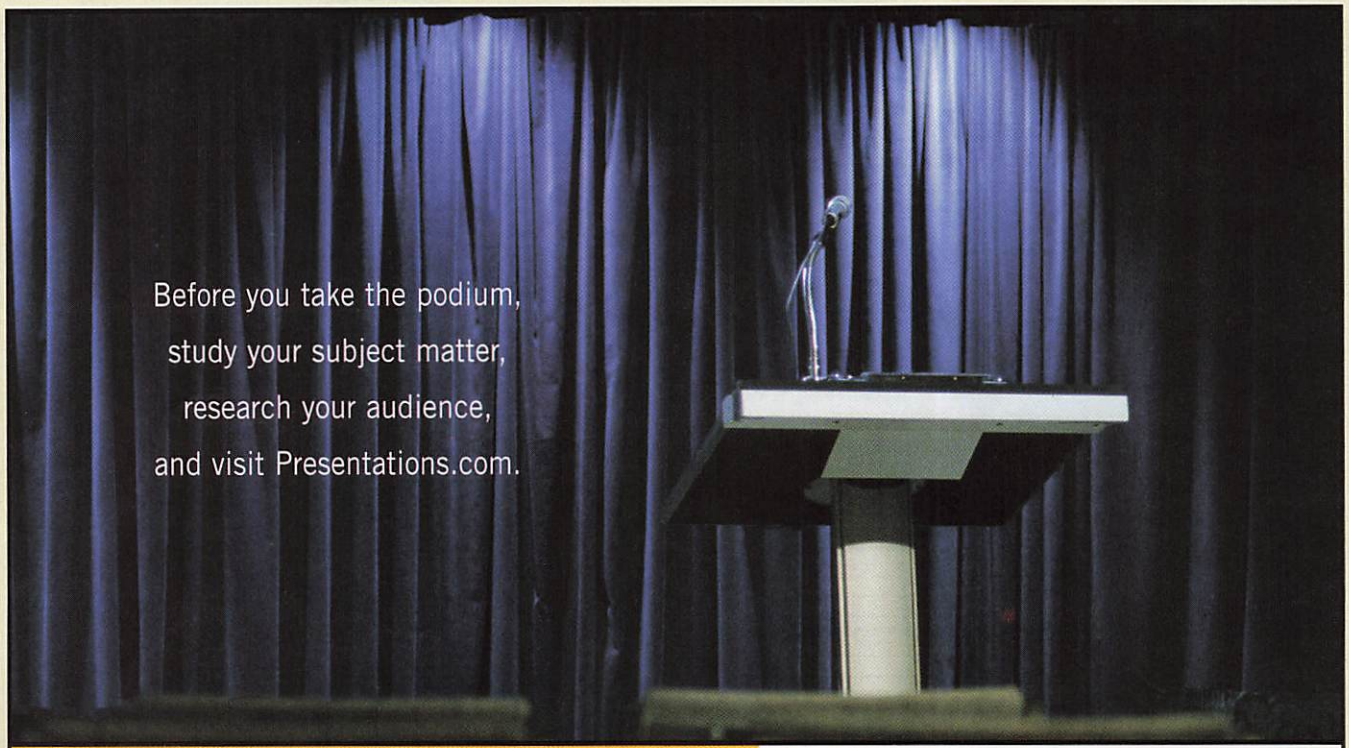

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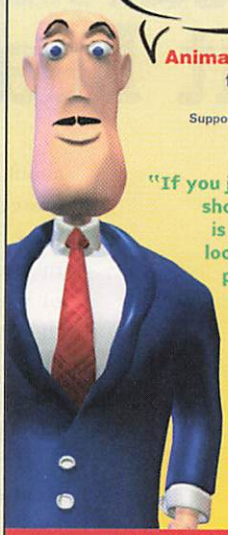

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Why Learning Isn't About Learning

Much is made these days of learning for the sake of learning. If individual people grow, so too will the larger organization grow, right? The trouble with this oversimplified notion, however, is that it is just too warm and fuzzy for today's business environment.

Learning in today's business environment is not about learning. It's about strategy. It is about creating a competitive advantage through your people.

Most businesses and other complex organizations such as government agencies have a defined employee training and development process. Learning interventions are often designed based on vaguely stated needs, and the number of people who sign up for and complete classes will be counted and reported. That's how most organizations are using learning.

But there are a few smart organizations that use learning a different way. These organizations understand that the only way to achieve the larger objectives of the enterprise is to link learning to their most key strategic business needs.

For example, what kind of strategic learning program would be important to a company that determines that improvements in customer service or increased sales or meeting federal compliance requirements is absolutely mission-critical? Customized content might sound good, but in reality, the fundamental tenets of customer service, salesmanship or current SEC regulations vary little, regardless of organization. Similarly, choosing the right delivery method—online or classroom-based, for instance—may make the program more convenient or accessible, but it doesn't guarantee that the learning program will result in positive, lasting organizational impact.

What really matters is the way an organization integrates these various elements into daily workflow while motivating participation and reinforcing the learning that occurs. This is where true strategic learning comes in, personalizing the entirety of a learning program to the prevailing organizational culture and its key business objectives.

Strategic learning, therefore, is less about the individual elements of the learning program and more about how that program is presented within, integrated into and reinforced throughout the workplace as a means by which a complex organization meets or exceeds stated objectives. After many years of working with our clients, we've learned that there are a couple of steps a complex enterprise can take to facilitate engagement at all levels and ensure that the program is truly designed to meet and exceed its business goals.

LEARNING IN TODAY'S BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT IS NOT ABOUT LEARNING. IT'S ABOUT STRATEGY.

JOE DOUGHERTY

The first step is to identify the strategic goals you want to reach through learning and focus on them exclusively. It's important to launch a highly targeted initiative rather than a broad, all-encompassing endeavor. Pick sales force effectiveness, for instance, or compliance or a specific business process improvement objective. By picking one or two areas of specific emphasis, the company is making a strong statement about which competencies it values most and views as its competitive differentiators.

Next is program implementation, which always requires diverse, highly personalized approaches because there is no single learning intervention, whether online or in a classroom, that is going to create permanent organizational change. It's an ongoing, often organic process that must be continually linked back and aligned with strategic business goals.

Finally, once learning has taken place, reinforcing it becomes a critical element of success. The way that reinforcement is accomplished will be unique to individual organizations, as we've found working with our clients, but it can't be overlooked if the learning is to be the key to reaching strategic enterprise objectives. Building and sustaining a culture of learning is crucial.

Learning can't be just about learning—at least not in the dynamic conditions of today's business environment. But one size will never fit all, which is why strategic, enterprise-learning programs must be tailored to meet your exact needs. It's how learning starts being about achieving and sustaining competitive advantage.

JOE DOUGHERTY *is president of Thomson NETg, Naperville, Ill. joseph.b.dougherty@thomson.com*

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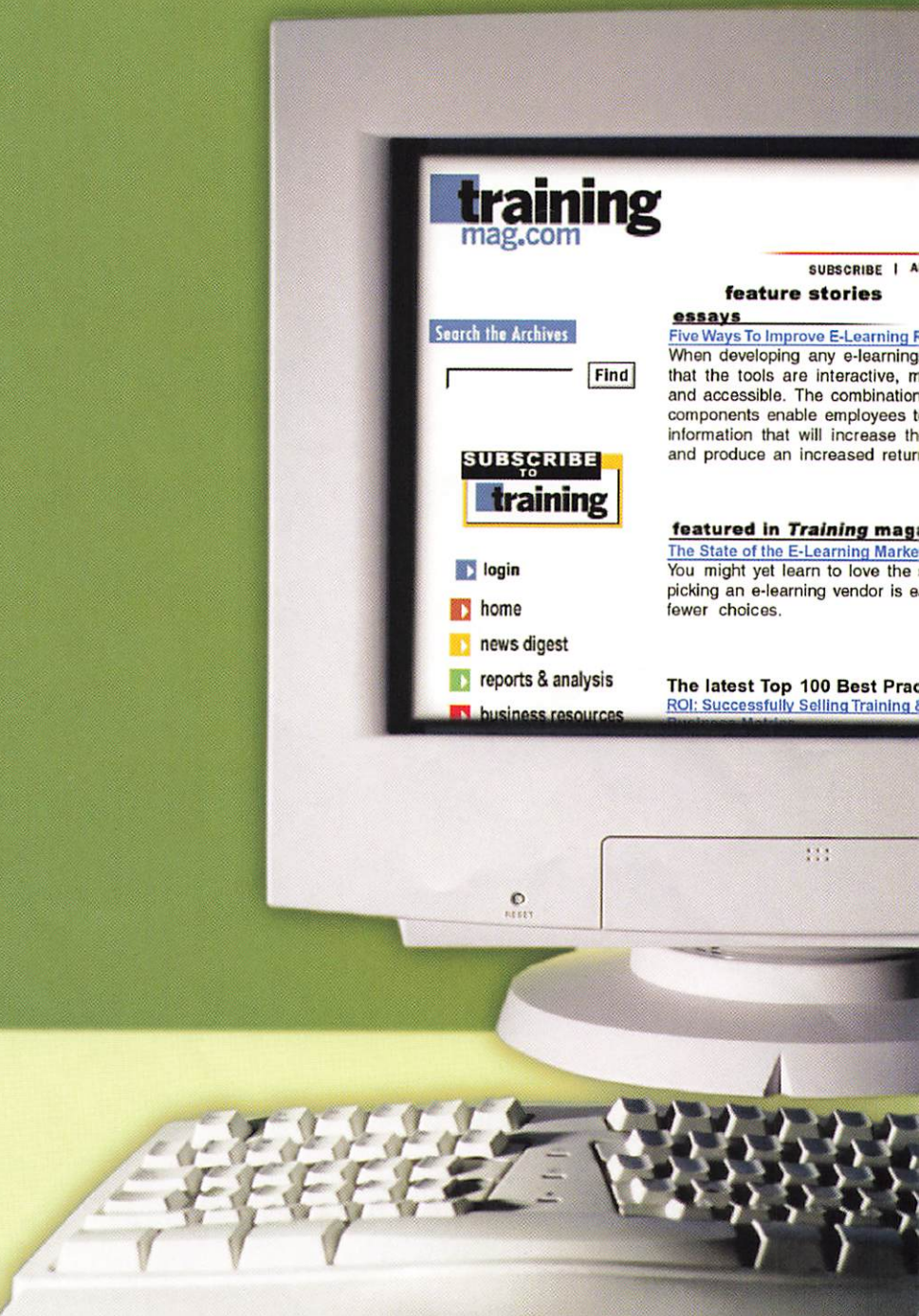

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